

**A Rediscovery of the Significance of 'from below' in Karl Barth's Christology**

**Son, Young Jin**

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## Abstract

The assumption of many theologians that Barth has a christology *only* 'from above' is highly questionable, in spite of his having such a strong and uncompromising emphasis 'from above' throughout his christology.

The primary reason for our doubt is that Barth *himself* emphasises his christology consists in both movement 'from above' *and* 'from below'. This being the case, regarding his christology as one only 'from above' is indeed very much open to debate, because no interpretation or comprehension can ever postulate its authenticity over against what the author said. Readers can give their opinions or observations, but they cannot force the author to accept their understandings to be the author.

Further, this christology 'from above' turns out to be a different matter when we comprehend Barth's christology by means of a *Sachkritik* ('content criticism'), a critique from an *holistic* point of view, instead of an analytic point of view. Differently put, when we ask the meaning and intention of this uncompromising emphasis 'from above' it is nothing but envisioning a 'from below'. The 'from above' does indeed stand and exist nowhere but *in* the 'from below'. Phrasing his christology as *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* in lieu of *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* etc, and portraying the *theologia crucifixionis* (which is for him the centre of christology) in such a chiastic way that the divine content is operated in the human form are the exact reflections of this christological insight.

Certainly Barth in many respects maintains a christology 'from above', especially seen from his method of approach and from the divine domination. However, our *Sachkritik* also suggests to us the fact that to dispute that he is advocating a christology 'from above' in view of the method of approach alone (the divine incarnation 'from above'), or in terms of the divine domination alone are only one-sided observations which surely lack an holistic or a comprehensive understanding of his christology. Insofar as the train of his christological thought is concerned, it does not stop or finish within a framework of 'from-to' alone, which implies much more of a lineal hermeneutic, but rather is a circular (trinitarian) hermeneutic. What needs to be noted is that, for him, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Godhead, is nothing but an exposition of revelation, Jesus Christ. Hence, if one insists on Barth holding a 'high' christology in view of his method of approach, this insistence would have to suffer from ignoring his *trinitarian hermeneutic* which is *the* christological and as such theological framework in his dogmatic enterprise.

Our *Sachkritik* naturally leads us to rediscover Barth's re-opening a new vista for natural theology which he once rejected so stringently-even its possibility. Surprisingly, although many theologians talk about the early and late Barth, many of them do not seem to follow the content of his development.

In short, as far as an impartial appreciation of Barth's christology is concerned, it is not only that we must take the 'from below' approach and content into account, but we must also ask the question of the meaning and intention of the christology 'from above' by means of *Sachkritik*. When his christology is seen from this point of view, to describe him as preserving one only 'from above' is indeed an oversimplification of his christology.

A theological significance of our contention is that it is *the* hermeneutical filter for our responsible understanding of christology, and as such God.



## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely the product of my own reaserch and was composed by myself, and that all ideas and written materials used are, to the best of my knowledge, appropriately acknowledged.

Son, Young Jin

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First of all, I thank God for His sufficient grace: He gave me enough strength and wisdom when I was exhausted; He constantly and yet anewly awoke my vision of faith when I was in doubt about the purpose of my academic discipline; He provided the daily needs of my family during the research.

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1st October 1996  
New College  
Edinburgh/Scotland

For my wife

Cho, Young Aeh and

my children Muhn and Myoung Ihn

## Foreword

The aim of our thesis is to *rediscover* the significance of a christology 'from below' in Barth's theology. It is not difficult at all to imagine that this title may easily upset many scholars of Barth, or that they may even simply disengage with our thesis, asserting that there is no such aspect at all in Barth's thought. Either attitude, whether sympathetically sceptical or harshly negative, towards the 'from below' aspect is understandable since the movement 'from above' was not only so predominant especially in his early thought, but it also still underlies his later thought in such a consistent manner as well. Therefore if we undermine the 'from above' movement in Barth's christology, it might be said, it will result in a complete misinterpretation. This is the primal implication of the word 'rediscovery' in the title of our thesis: *A Rediscovery of the Significance of 'from below' in Barth's Christology*.

However, we are equally convinced that it would be a serious misunderstanding if we obscure the 'from below' movement in Barth's christology. Why? To defend our view is not difficult (at least from our perspective!) as Barth *himself* reminds us so clearly and strongly of his christology definitively consisting of both the 'from above' and 'from below' movements (CD IV/2, 21; CD IV/1, 123, 135). But, for the purpose of our thesis, we will go beyond this apparent reminder by investigating further what Barth *means* by this dual scheme of both 'from above' and 'from below'. For the same purpose, we will seek a responsible answer to the question whether we should call Barth's christology truly a christology 'from above' judging upon the basis of such a consistent emphasis upon the 'from above.' In other words, we will scrutinise what the 'from above' movement truly signifies, if this 'from above' movement is indisputably prevalent, and if it is in fact what he 'finally' says in his christology. Our question about the insistence upon the 'from above' will be even more seriously pursued than that of the dual scheme both 'from above' and 'from below', as this line of understanding is by far the major concern and thus the point of controversy of our thesis. And surprisingly - particularly for those who resolutely argue that 'from above' is alone in Barth's christology - *in a qualified sense*, we even sense that what Barth means by the both 'from above and

from below' and 'from above' in his christology is nothing but the christology 'from below'. We believe that this perception is the content of our *Sachkritik* (content criticism) of the two understandings based on a consistent reference to Barth's dogmatics. This formidable inclination is a further implication of the word 'rediscovery' in the title of our thesis.

The character of our thesis is a *reinterpretive analysis* of the text (Barth's dogmatics), as we intend to *rediscover* the significance of the 'from below' in addition to the biased view of the 'from above' among Barth interpreters. Methodologically, then, our thesis will proceed by way of an *exposition*. We lay stress on this expository methodology since we believe that, ultimately, no interpretations can verify or vindicate what Barth said but Barth himself. Hence we regard all the views and interpretations of Barth's christology only as secondary references however sound that they may be. But this is by no means to play down other interpretations and views but rather this is by all means to clarify their positions by contrasting them with our view. Then our thesis is a cordial but serious invitation of any serious theologians or students into a sincere and serious dialogue with Barth, and as such with our perspective.

Why this issue in particular? We believe this issue is not merely a play on words or concepts, but is crucial as *the hermeneutical filter* for our responsible speaking of christology and therefore of God. Our Christian faith and theology will be determined ultimately by the *kind* of God whom we know or confess, since we wish to believe in *Him* (at least in principle if our faith is genuine) and therefore to live our lives according to *our* understanding of God. Further, if we succeed in rediscovering the significance of the 'from below' aspect, our thesis will have tremendous implications in many respects: a more relevant and therefore more acceptable doctrine of God for more scientifically and rationally oriented modern human beings; a continuous challenge to human beings and their society which therefore forces Christians to engage in the issue of justice which will be addressed later.

Why Barth then? Our primary concern lies with a *proper* evaluation of Barth's thought. The more seriously we study Barth, the more surprisingly we find

many errors either in a clear misrepresentations or a partial contortions of Barth's ideas. Responsible scholarship, however, does not tolerate either unbearable exaggeration or unverified assumption. Conversely, we are concerned with an appropriate or full *appreciation* rather than criticism, not only because of scholars' general consensus that modern theology cannot be properly discussed apart from Barth, but also because it is often the case that appreciation is a much more difficult task than criticism.

Certainly appreciation presupposes interpretation. But interpretation too presupposes a certain presupposition. This indicates that the strength of our thesis lies in its *own perspective*. This strength of perspective is in turn, then, an implicit challenge to Western scholarship which seems to rest its mechanism of understanding too heavily upon the process of *analysis* (analytical mind-set) instead of seeing things in a *holistic* or *comprehensive* or *synthetical* way.

The thesis will consist of five chapters. The opening chapter sketches the recent development to the issue 'from above-from below' in order to give readers a basic orientation of the issue involved. Having given a glimpse of the issue, the second chapter will then analyse the various views of Barth interpreters which will enable us to set up the issues to be discussed. On this basis of analysis, the succeeding three chapters will investigate the tenability of the claim that Barth truly has a christology 'from above' alone.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Recent Development of the Issue

#### I. Introduction

##### 1. The Protagonists of the Issue 'from above/from below' in Contemporary Christology

The phrases 'from above' and 'from below' are too complex to be simply defined. The concepts could be defined in many ways not only comparatively between the 'from above' and the 'from below', but also independently within the 'from above' or the 'from below' itself.<sup>1</sup> We see an example of the complexity of

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<sup>1</sup> Clarifying 'from above' and 'from below' is conceptually (categorically) and methodologically problematic since the phrases could be understood in such manifold ways according to how we conceptually and categorically define them. For instance, we may delineate 'from above' and 'from below' in terms of divinity vs. humanity, or fact vs. meaning (interpretation), or precedent question between methodology vs. epistemology etc. Methodologically too, as Tracy points out, describing the two forms of christology is also problematic, because 'high' christology which seeks the christological meaning and therefore builds christology in terms of a 'philosophical reconstruction' of Jesus still seems to rest on the assumption that only the fact of Jesus termed as 'low' christology secures the christological meaning, 'high' christology (David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* [New York: Seabury, 1975], pp. 216-218, 231-232). (=Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*) For the illusiveness of the subject see also (Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today; A Study of Continuities in Christology* [London: Darton and Longman & Todd Ltd., 1983], esp. pp. 45-46, 49-51, 53; John Macquarrie, "The Humanity of Christ" in: *Theology* 74, [1971], p. 246; Nicholas Lash, "Up and Down in Christology" in: *New Studies in Theology* 1, (ed.) S. Sykes & Holmes Derek [London: Gerald Duckworth, 1980], pp. 31-46, esp. 32-33, 43-44). Hereafter, (=Gunton, *Yesterday and Today*), (=Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ*), and (=Lash, *Up and Down in Christology*).

Cone adopts the idioms 'from above'/'from below' in terms of the past ('from above') vs. the present ('from below') of Jesus Christ in order to emphasise that a proper understanding of christology does not exclude one aspect on another but mutually includes (James H. Cone, *The God of the Oppressed* [New York: The Seabury Press, 1975], p. 108-137, esp. 130). While, as for Rosato, the 'Logos christology' represents a christology 'from above', the 'Spirit christology' represents a christology 'from below'. See pages 1-2 in chapter two. The illusiveness of Rosato's definition is found in the fact that, at a glance, the 'Spirit christology' seems to refer rather a 'high' christology as the word 'Spirit' is by all means an ambiguous, unseeable, unphysical reality and thus it could be understood more easily in metaphysical terms such as 'life giving power' as Moltmann recently describes it (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* [SCM Press, 1994]). In case of Pittenger, the word 'from above-from below' is used rather in order to say that the actualisation of our abiding relationship in God (fulfilled by the election of Jesus Christ) is by the 'Self Expressive' Word of God and not by chance (W. Norman Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate. A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* [James Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1959], p. 182).

Generally speaking, it seems that while the phrase 'from above-from below' is invented to characterise Barth's (and others too!) christology in terms of *the method of approach*, the 'high' and 'low' is employed to argue the *relevance* of christology, especially of Barth's christology. Yet we use the two wordings interchangeably as theologically we regard the method of approach eventually as a matter of relevance and *vice versa*.

the issue 'from above' and 'from below' in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. According to Moltmann, we cannot call this or that christology a christology 'from above' or 'from below' on the basis of the pattern of christology, incarnation and crucifixion or humiliation and exaltation. Emphasising the divinity of Jesus Christ rather than His humanity, or asking first of all what was 'above' in terms of the question of God and salvation before asking about the Jesus of Nazareth cannot be called a 'christology from above'.<sup>2</sup>

Moltmann admits that christological answers begin with 'from above' and then present the mystery of Jesus Christ on the pattern of the incarnation and the resurrection. The modern 'speculative christology' of German idealism worked out its christologies on this pattern.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the christology 'from above' considers itself the history of Jesus of Nazareth. In the ancient theological doctrine, the '*ratio cognoscendi*' works rather in the '*ratio essendi*.' It is *being* which lasts for human knowledge and not *vice versa*. This means that Jesus *is* already the Son of God even *prior to* the events of crucifixion and resurrection although Jesus is not recognisable as the Son of God until these events take place. Whereas being is classified as 'from above', for Moltmann, knowledge is classified as 'from below'. However, at the same time he points out how essentially the 'from above' and the 'from below' are *inter-locked* by stating that 'All knowledge begins inductively 'from below' and is *a posteriori*, and all historical knowledge is *post factum*.' That is to say, both epistemology and 'from below' presuppose both ontology and 'from above'. Further, the question about God assumes that it is a finite human being who asks the question concerning infinite divine being. Hence it is not necessary 'to stand in the position of God', as Pannenberg phrased it to critique Barth, in order to follow the Son's way into the world. Rather 'one must accept the openness of

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1980), p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God* 89-91.

one's own finite existence in order to recognize its fulfilment of one's own openness.'<sup>4</sup> Thus Moltmann declares that the difference between a christology 'from above' and a christology 'from below' is 'only apparent.'<sup>5</sup>

Generally speaking, however, we may say that christology 'from above' represents the christology which attempts to understand Christ by beginning with the *divinity* of Christ, or with the divine incarnation. In other words, the christology 'from above' which is often called 'high' christology is concerned mainly with its *a priori* divine origin, and then comes to investigate the meaning of the actual historical manifestation, the humanity of Christ. In contrast, christology 'from below' which is also called 'low' christology represents the christology which essays to understand Christ by focusing on the *human reality* of Christ, and, then asks whether He was the Christ or a mere human being. To put it simply, while the christology 'from above' proceeds from divinity to humanity, the christology 'from below' proceeds from humanity to divinity. But these two insights of christological paradigms originate from the Scripture<sup>6</sup> in which the two paradigms are expressed in an intermingled way. Broadly speaking, however, while the Synoptic Gospels in their basic characters tend to present a christology beginning with 'historical' development of the humanity of Christ 'from below', the Johannine Gospel and the Pauline epistles tend to present their christologies with a view of the incarnation of the Logos 'from above'.

That the Scripture is the origin of our issue signifies the fact that the theme which we are going to deal with is not new but discussed throughout Christian

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<sup>4</sup> (Moltmann, *The Crucified God* 89). For Moltmann on W. Pannenberg and O. Weber, see pp. 108-109, fn. 18 (*ibid*). For Pannenberg on Barth, see (W. Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* [London: SCM Press, 1973], p. 35). (=Pannenberg, *Jesus-God Man*). In addition, we see a human beings' 'openness' towards the infinite Being in chapter one developed by Rahner in terms of the 'transcendental christology.'

<sup>5</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God* 91.

<sup>6</sup> Macquarrie, for example, believes the christology 'from below' is not an apologetic device in a secular age but the 'recapitulation' of the early christian christology. They knew first the human Jesus; but somewhere along the way they discerned in him a depth that led them to confess his divinity. The story of the transfiguration is the striking symbol of this experience (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 249-250).

theology.<sup>7</sup> This familiarity of the issue, with respect to our thesis, suggests that we cannot bypass our past tradition. Our difficulty in trying to bypass the tradition becomes even more conspicuous when we see the extent of Barth's wide range of indebtedness to the heritages of past theologies and rationalities. Indeed, Barth's theology covers the period from the early Church fathers to his contemporaries.

However, we will limit the scope of our introductory discussion within the christological thoughts of the nineteenth century. We will do this because we are first of all concerned with the manageability of our thesis. And secondly because although Barth's integration of the past ecclesiastical tradition is seen throughout his christology, the source of this integration is found particularly in the nineteenth century's thinking in terms of a christological framework apart from the Scripture. As TeSelle states, 'We are all of us children of the nineteenth century in theology, even those who occasionally engage in parricide. ... The nineteenth century is still with us as part of our living past ... and in understanding it we can understand ourselves better.'<sup>8</sup> Bearing these two reasons in mind, we will select F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), and A. Ritschl (1822-1889), and then we will briefly mention their christologies regarding their major figures in laying (directly or indirectly) a groundbreaking notional framework of 'from above' or 'from below' in their ways of doing christology among modern theologians.<sup>9</sup>

Schleiermacher's christology is shaped by his reaction against the dominant idea of natural religion. His contemporaries despised popular religion. They were

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<sup>7</sup> For a brief survey of the history of the concepts 'from above' and 'from below' see (Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1971], pp. 60-64); for a wider discussion see (Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 1-183, esp. 1-55).

<sup>8</sup> (Eugene TeSelle, *Christ in Context: Divine Purpose and Human Possibility* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975], p. 47). For Barth's interaction with nineteenth century thought consult *From Rousseau to Ritschl* even though his view is mostly critical rather than receptive of it (trans. Brian Cozens [London: SCM Press, 1959], esp. pp. 268-397).

<sup>9</sup> Baur is another nineteenth century theologian who employed the concept 'from above' and 'from below' in christology (Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien* [Tübingen, L.F. Fues, 1847], pp. 312-314, cited by Hodgson's *Jesus-Word and Presence. An Essay in Christology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], p. 60).



not tolerant of its exclusive claim, and they assumed that religion could only be taken seriously and properly by the respected or by the educated people insofar as it is capable of making a certain statement in terms of a universal and eternal truths of natural religion. In other words, the contemporaries of Schleiermacher understood religion as primarily a matter of intellect. But Schleiermacher, against his contemporaries' attitude, perceives that religion must learn to give discursive reason its due rights. Religion must allow for the freedom and autonomy of the moral consciousness, because religion has its root in the depths of human personality which is deeper than reason or will. Religion lies in the relation of each human person to the Infinite. It is not a function of thought or action, but of the 'feeling of absolute dependence.' As religion is all about each individual's feeling, the essence of religion must be understood individually rather than collectively as a whole. Thus the great historical religions are not to be regarded as declensions from or additions to the simple general truths of a supposed religion of Nature, but the necessary and varied individual demonstrations of a fundamental relationship between the finite and the Infinite. Schleiermacher applies this understanding of religion to the two historical religions, Judaism and Christianity. However we are concerned with Christianity. In Christianity, according to Schleiermacher, we discover the struggle of the Infinite God to reconcile the disobedient world to Himself. In redeeming the fallen world, Jesus Christ announced Himself to be the Divine. And although this announcement that He is the Divine, *viz.* Jesus' 'God-consciousness', is mystery, one significant thing is that the union of the divine 'nature' and the human 'nature'<sup>10</sup> is accomplished. Accordingly the knowledge of

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<sup>10</sup> For Schleiermacher, the orthodox doctrine of Christ as one Person in two natures is unintelligible. The word 'nature' applied to the Divine does not exist in a monotheistic faith but in a polytheistic religion. Also, divine and human cannot be brought together under a single conception. The word 'nature' is wrongly adopted for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ since nature is the sum of all finite or corporeal existence, while Divine is infinite and more than corporeal existence. Consequently the word 'nature' cannot be attributed to God. And, if 'person' indicates a constant unity of life whilst 'nature' is a sum of the ways of action or laws, then the unity of life cannot coexist with the duality of natures unless the one gives way to the other, or unless they fuse into each other. Hence all the results of the effort to achieve a living presentation

the Christian religion is chiefly about Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Having seen Schleiermacher's view thus far, what strikes us is that he does not simply assume an irrefutable revelation in describing his christology. Rather, articulating the *historicity* as being the ground of christology above all other elements, 'he had opened up a method of approach to historical positive religion without presupposing the conception of infallible revelation.'<sup>12</sup> Another indication

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of the unity of the divinity and humanity in christology have always oscillated, either by separating the two natures or disturbing the necessary balance, or by forming the third formulation which is neither human or divine, nor both divine and human. Also, the question of two natures in one person raises the question of whether two natures also have two wills according to the number of natures. Incidentally, the question may also be raised as to whether Christ had two reasons, as we are accustomed to take will and reason together. Further, the Western Church's talking about the 'three Persons' in one Essence in the doctrine of the Trinity is also unintelligible as it resulted in the three Persons as an independent anterior existence in themselves. If each person is also a nature, we will have three divine natures for the three divine Persons in the one Divine Essence. So Schleiermacher was sceptical about the values of this dogmatics of 'nature' for ecclesiastical use (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, [1830-1<sup>2</sup>] 1928], pp. 391-398).

Pittenger also observes this 'nature christology', two natures in one person, as 'frankly and utterly incredible' (Norman Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered*, [London: SCM Press, 1970], pp. 11-12). This incredibility becomes even stronger to those who were influenced by Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Thailhard de Chardin etc., since these figures understood being (or person) rather in terms of 'process', 'relation' or 'in the light of cosmic dimension'. Such an unintelligible 'nature christology' was a result of an attempt to perceive Jesus Christ in terms of substance. Recognising this problem of 'nature (substance) christology' Pittenger suggests a metaphor of relationship, 'love-in-act' (*ibid.*, 21), regarding it as the 'key' (*ibid.*, 20) metaphor in understanding christology on the whole. And this suggestion of the theme of 'love' is what he means by the title *Christology Reconsidered* (*ibid.*, 1-153).

Yet Schleiermacher's attempt to replace the word 'two natures' by a more proper word reveals that his own assumptions are also being dualistic since he defines God as the unconditioned, and the world and humanity as the conditioned (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 392). Recognising this case, Gunton points out that Schleiermacher fails in his attempt to demonstrate the fact that the chief problems of christology are inherent in the tradition. The problem of Schleiermacher's view, according to Gunton, is that he rather adopts the critique of the tradition from the transcendent perspective, the unconditionality of 'God being'. This problem was the result of the lack of the appreciation of the complexity of the christological debate before and after Chalcedon, Antiochene and Alexandrian alike (Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 88-92).

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its cultured despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [=1988<sup>2</sup>]), pp. 96-223; *The Christian Faith* 31-76, 131-141.

<sup>12</sup> (J.M. Creed, *The divinity of Jesus Christ. A study in the history of Christian doctrine since Kant* [London: Cambridge University Press, 1938], p. 24). Emphasis added, and hereafter (ea). (=Creed, *The Divinity of Jesus Christ*). Alike, 'he [Schleiermacher] does not attempt to deduce formal conclusions of a doctrinal character from the texts of Scripture. His system is not to be a collection of *credenda* but an interpretation of an actual faith controlled by a dominant Person, Jesus



of Schleiermacher opening up a method of describing christology 'from below' is found when he says that 'Christianity is a monotheistic faith, belonging to the theological type of religion, and is essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly, but perhaps even more clearly, Schleiermacher extends another clue to this opening up by stating that 'The disciples recognised in Him [Christ's humanity] the Son of God without having the faintest premonition of His resurrection and ascension, and we too may say the same ourselves.'<sup>14</sup> That is to say, Schleiermacher exposes a sign of the 'from below' element in his christology by suggesting that the disciples already had a 'full' christology - that this man was the Son of God - prior to and apart from the resurrection, which supposedly epitomises the divine power and reality worked out 'from above down to below'.<sup>15</sup>

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of Nazareth' (*ibid.*, 27).

<sup>13</sup> (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 52). For Brunner, Schleiermacher's scene of general religion as feeling or intuition, and at the same time, seeing the Christian religion (Jesus Christ) essentially as knowledge, is a fundamental contradiction (Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon [London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934], pp. 90-94).

Yet Creed disagrees with Brunner's criticism. Christianity apart from knowledge of Jesus Christ is not possible. It is also true however that there are other religions alongside of Christianity which share certain general characteristics, because we use the one generic term, 'religion,' of them all. Then it is legitimate to maintain both standpoints: religion is a universal element in humankind and there is no Christianity without Jesus Christ. The general characteristic of religion should receive a peculiar quality through the knowledge of that particular Jesus Christ. Brunner is afraid of the doctrine of the single sufficiency of the Mediator (Creed, *The Divinity of Jesus Christ* 36-38).

<sup>14</sup> (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 418). The reason, according to Schleiermacher, is that Paul does not seem to suppose that the resurrection has an exclusive connection with the peculiar being of God in Christ, even though Paul seems to attribute to the resurrection just as much as to the death, as a share of its own in redemption (Rom 4:25) and sees the resurrection as a guarantee of our own resurrection (1 Cor 15:13, 16). Also, the resurrection was never adduced as evidence of divine indwelling in Christ; it is not ascribed to Christ, but to God (Acts 2:24, 3:5, 4:10; Rom 4:24; 1 Cor 6:14, 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14) (*ibid.*). Contrary to Schleiermacher's opinion, Creed argues that Paul's statement of 'the first-fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor 15:13) rather represents the doctrinal and religious significance of the resurrection (Creed, *The Divinity of Jesus Christ* 33). Anyhow, modern Christian scholarships would not agree with Schleiermacher's standpoint as they believe that the disciples recognised Jesus as Christ only after the resurrection.

<sup>15</sup> 'The [Schleiermacher's] thought of a divine being who comes down from above is replaced by the teaching that in Christ there takes place the 'completion of the creation of man', so that his deity is found in his perfected humanity' (John Macquarrie, "Recent Thinking on Christian Belief" in: *The Expository Times* Vol. 88 [Oct. 1976-Sept. 1977], p. 37; similarly, 'He [Schleiermacher] ... seeks to replace the "divine being who comes down from heaven" with a "perfected humanity in

According to Hegel, for Christianity, the 'infinite Idea of the Incarnation' is the 'speculative middlepoint' or 'centre' of the understanding of true God and His relation to the world.<sup>16</sup> The idea of the Incarnation 'permeates all religions' (LPR 1:77). Yet, Christian christology fulfils all religious consciousness since only Christianity demonstrates true God in this idea of Incarnation. Religious consciousness was all about seeking the true God or true Spirit. This religious consciousness which all religions longed for is manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. So Christian religion is the 'perfect [or consummate: *vollendete*], absolute religion' (LPR 1:84; VPR 11:83) of all religions. For Hegel, this christological knowledge: that 'Jesus is Christ', is possible on two grounds.

On the one hand, in the *ordo cognoscendi* 'everything [our christological knowledge] must come to us in an external way' (LPR 2:336), as the 'objective' for human consciousness mediated by sensuous intuition in perception; that is to say, our christological knowledge is constituted in the external or 'objective' character of religious knowledge. On the other hand, although our christological knowledge first appears in an 'objective' and in an external character of religious knowledge based within human capacity, it is by no means to remain in this condition (LPR 2:337). What is true for [mankind's] spirit is something for which 'sensuous manifestation becomes of secondary value' (LPR 3:117-118). Our christological knowledge, which 'starts' with the sensuously positive aspects of historical knowledge in a religious tradition, is transformed into a content of 'entirely different nature,' for it has changed itself 'from being a sensuous, empirically existing object into a divine object. ... [As such] this content is no longer anything sensuous' (LPR 3:116).

Now, this movement from the sensuous object to the spiritual, *i.e.* the dual

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which deity was experienced" (David G.A. Calvert, *From Christ to God* [London: Epworth Press 1983], p. 1).

<sup>16</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3 vols, trans. & ed., E.B. Speirs & J. Burdon Sanderson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co. Ltd., 1895), 1:151 (=LPR 1:151); from 'Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion' vols. 11-12, ed. D. Philipp Marheineke in: *Werke*, 11:146. (=VPR 11:146)

aspect 'from below' and 'from above', appears in Hegel's understanding of Christian faith as well. Faith 'starts' from the history of the life of Christ. Nevertheless, faith anchored in this history alters its meaning. That is to say, faith 'has to do not only with faith as faith in this external history, but with the fact that this man was the Son of God' (LPR 3:115). Christology 'has the Divine for its content, divine action, divine timeless events, a mode of working that is absolutely divine' which becomes the object of our reason (LPR 1:146). However, christology is more than the Divine act because it develops itself in the 'phenomenal sphere.' This 'phenomenal sphere' as the 'inner element' of christology has the decisive speculative significance in doing christology. This means, for Hegel, that the history of Jesus of Nazareth is 'the Idea of Spirit itself,' that is, 'the infinite history of God.'<sup>17</sup>

We may ask, how does Hegel know this? What kind of christology does he suggest to us? According to him, we know this since it is a truth 'implicitly present in the self-consciousness of men' (LPR 3:112). Differently put, we know Jesus as being the Christ because this knowledge is exposed 'in the process of history, by the gradual advance of the World-Spirit' (LPR 3:112). Yet how and why should this particular Jesus be believed as Christ in spite of many divine messengers? Hegel replies:

... the Idea ... when it was ripe and the time was fulfilled, was able to attach itself only to Christ, and to see itself realized only in him. ... This [fact] is what must be understood as basic; this is the verification, the absolute proof; this is what is to be understood as the witness of the Spirit. It is the Spirit, the indwelling Idea, which has attested Christ's mission and this is the verification for those who believed and for us who possess the developed *Begriff* [the developed concept or form of christology] (LPR 3:113; VPR 12:320-321).

The point Hegel is making in this statement is that we can do or have our christology because Jesus of Nazareth is *known* to be the Christ by virtue of the inner testimony of the Spirit. This inner certainty given by the Spirit is the *final*

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<sup>17</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 3 vols, trans. E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simpson (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 3:16 (=LHP, 3:16); from 'Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte' vols 11, 3rd ed, in: *Sämtliche Werke*, 15:100. (=VPG, 15:100).

verification both for the christology of the primitive Christian community and for the christology of modern time.

What does our discussion tell us with regard to our thesis? Certainly, it should be noted that Hegel does not explicitly spell out a christology 'from above' or 'from below' so to speak. And Küng argues that Hegel's christology proceeds too much 'from above' and too speculatively 'high.'<sup>18</sup> This critique is quite right for two reasons. First, it seems that Hegel did not sufficiently reflect upon the human aspect or reality of Christ even though he weaves this aspect sporadically into his lectures on religion. Secondly, Hegel deals with christology basically in the framework of religion, religion which is highly ambiguous to define. Nevertheless, according to our analysis, what is important in Hegel's christology in connection with our thesis are these two points. First, analytically speaking, Hegel's perception of 'from above' or 'from below' mainly revolves around an epistemic ground (How could we know the 'indwelling Idea'?) rather than a methodic ground (How we could approach, or whether this or that approach is possible or impossible). Secondly, Christian christology is constituted by the two christological elements 'from above' and 'from below' in such a way that one christology cannot be done without the other at least in principle if not in practice.<sup>19</sup> It could be 'from above'

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<sup>18</sup> (Hans Küng, *Menschwerdung Gottes: Eine Einführung in Hegels theologisches Denken als Prolegomena zu einer künftigen Christologie* [Friebrugh: Herder, 1970], pp. 592-599). A similar view is shared by TeSelle. Hegel's christology, in its character, did not show any interest in questioning the personal dynamics of Jesus' 'inner life' in His function as Christ. Instead, Hegel was looking at the *meaning* of Jesus for other persons and his starting-point in doing this was the human consciousness, not Jesus in Himself. Thus the Christ event was of 'speculative' significance for christology and faith. Hegel tried to show in what sense Jesus has personal and present *religious significance* for human self-understanding in the current economy of God's redemptive work in the world (TeSelle, *Christ in Context* 51, 48). However, Yerkes argues that Hegel was interested also in Jesus' inner life, especially in his early time in contrast to the late emphasis on the meaning of Jesus as Christ (James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* [Scholars Press, Missoula, Montana No. 23], p. 318, 329 fn. 23). (=Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*)

<sup>19</sup> 'Barth, in his era, felt the need to emphasize the truth of God's transcendence as "wholly other" in relation to man and the world; Hegel clearly felt the need to emphasize the truth of God's immanence as "wholly present".' 'And both if read carefully, do not fail to maintain the respective converse truths' (Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* 311). Hegel's christology functions with both 'mythic' and 'existential power in human consciousness' (*ibid.*, 176).

In probability, Hegel's dual aspect of christology emerged in reaction to the existing

because he takes the Incarnation of God in Jesus as the sole Divine act witnessing to the ontological redemptive truth from God to humankind. It could also be 'from below' since our confirmation of this from above is explicitly known 'everywhere and by all' in the life of a man Jesus, and this man's life continually renders to be present to us as *human* possibility for the perception of christology.

Albrecht Ritschl also has influenced modern christological thought. One of Ritschl's most basic claims is that the originally historical and dynamic Gospel of the early Church was transformed into a speculative Christianity.<sup>20</sup> But the

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correspondence between the cultural forms of philosophical 'scepticism' and religious 'subjectivism' his day. Hegel may have wanted to reject both extremes by emphasising both 'from above' and 'from below'. On the one hand, philosophical 'scepticism' is to be rejected since we *know* Jesus' as being the Divine *by watching this man* ('from below'). Namely, we cannot be sceptical of the answer to the ultimate philosophical question as to 'what God is.' Now, Hegel's persistent position is that philosophy is all about the knowledge of 'what *is*' (e.g., *LPR* 3:112 [*VPR* 12:319]; *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p. 11 [=PR]; *The Logic of Hegel*, trans. William Wallace [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892<sup>2</sup>], p. 78). Its fundamental subject matter or object is God, as philosophy and religion share the conviction that God is 'the unrestricted principle and cause on which everything hangs' (*PR* 165-166). In such a way 'the content of religion and philosophy is the same' although their forms of expression differ from each other. On the other hand, religious subjectivism is to be rejected as we ultimately confess Jesus as Christ by virtue of the inner testimony of the *Spirit* (which is 'from above'), and not by human feeling or experience.

<sup>20</sup> In line with the rejection of the hellenised Christianity in favour of the dynamic Gospel, Ritschl also refuses the traditional perception of the possibility of the reconciliation as a 'penal satisfaction' to God. But this 'penal satisfaction', which understands the reconciliation in terms of a moral order, is derived from the Greek concept of justice. This penal satisfaction suggests God being the dispenser of both reward and punishment of human actions. But the problem with this view lies in its mingling law with religion, and applying the principle of law to the principle of religion. Religion and law are the two species, and species is an exclusive concept. Then the legal concept of justice cannot be applied to the religion of reconciliation since the latter has been laid upon His *grace*. If we (as Anselm did) derive the necessity for penal satisfaction from a concept of the justice of God, then this view would imply an equality (*Billigkeit*) in private rights between God and human beings. Moreover, it is a contradiction to derive the possibility of the reconciliation (as Luther did) from the love of God, and at the same time to derive it from the wrath of God for which Christ had to satisfy through His vicarious (substitution theory) endurance of punishment. For it is impossible to think of sinners as objects both of God's love and God's wrath at the same time and in the same respect. What the Scripture testifies foremost is the *goodness* of God: God causes the sun to rise on both the good and the evil, and lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust; Christ declares to love even our enemies (Matt 5: 44-48). If this is the perfection of God, God cannot be understood in terms of the co-ordinator of punishment and reward. Therefore the view of 'penal satisfaction' (substitution) derived from the twofold attribute of God as being the 'Punisher' and the 'Rewarder', is an 'idol' (*ibid.*, 261).

The problem is that from the outset some theologians (represented by Justin Martyr and



problem is that for Christians 'doing' christology is primarily not a matter of rational inquiry but a matter of *belief* in Him, the belief which is based on the historical fact and not on a conceptualisation or on a metaphysical understanding. We are able to understand God only when we 'consciously' and 'intentionally' accept the faith of the early community of Christ.<sup>21</sup> In principle, except for the doctrine of God, Christian dogmatics offer no opportunity to set forth directly a metaphysical concept.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly the task of modern theology is to return to dynamic, history, and Hebraic thought. For Ritschl, this implies that Christ's divinity could not be spoken of responsibly unless we have first experienced Christ's saving power. Human beings know Christ's divinity only through what He actually has done for us. So Ritschl declares that the statement that Christ is 'my Lord' depends on the 'whole scope of His human existence, activity, and

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then expanded by the Lutherans and Reformed theologians) ascribed to justice greater importance than to grace. By definition, justice is a conditional concept but grace is an unconditional concept. As such, justice is a part of grace and grace encircles justice. In such a way, the possibility and necessity of the reconciliation lies in God's *grace*, that is, 'His whole righteousness' (*ibid.*, 265). In sum, with regard to the possibility and the necessity of the reconciliation, Ritschl rejects the concept of 'penal vicarious satisfaction', that is both 'satisfaction theory' and 'substitution theory,' while adopting the concept of *righteousness*, because the former ideas are not biblical points of view but are from the Hellenic religion which has carried over into Christianity (Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900], pp. 259-265, 472-484, esp. 259-265, 478). (=Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*)

Yet Crawford in an earlier time shared a different view from Ritschl. Crawford holds that using the concept of 'substitution' is perfectly legitimate since that concept had already been widely spread at that time. For his view of 'substitution theory' Crawford refers his readers to the terms 'ἀντί' in Mark 10:45 (cf. Matt 20:28) and 'ὑπὲρ' in 1 Timothy 2:6 (Thomas J. Crawford, *The Doctrine of Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement* [Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883<sup>4</sup>], pp. 20-26, 177, 495-496; also *The Mysteries of Christianity* [Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1874], pp. 221-251).

<sup>21</sup> (Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* 4). '... if we can rightly know God only if we know Him through Christ, then we can know Him only if we belong to the community of believers' (*ibid.*, 7). For Ritschl's overall critique of the predominant rationalism in Christian theology see pp. 1-25, 193-279 (*ibid.*).

<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Ritschl does not entirely rule out the use of metaphysics in Christian theology, for methodically metaphysics is necessary as the formal pattern for the cognition of religious entities or relationships. So the remaining question is: 'which [=what form of] metaphysics is justified in theology?' (Ritschl, *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972], p. 187). For Ritschl's view of the role of metaphysics in Christian theology see pp. 151-212 (*ibid.*). (=Ritschl, *Three Essays*)

suffering.'<sup>23</sup> Now, to emphasise the centrality of the 'from below' element in christology, Ritschl goes on to say that '... it really is in Christ's *human* achievements that His Godhead becomes for His people manifest, conspicuous, intelligible, winning our faith, not in the form of assent to an unintelligible dogma, but of personal trust for our own salvation.'<sup>24</sup> Further, our honouring Christ as God, and our confession of Christ's divinity, is a 'value-judgment' of His 'saving influence' upon ourselves.<sup>25</sup> This saving influence is the achievement in Christ's humanity. Thus determining the being of God *a priori*, 'from above' downwards, prior to the saving effect and actual revelation, 'from below' upwards, is problematic.<sup>26</sup>

However, it was Karl Rahner (1905-1984) who has explicitly elaborated on the concept 'from above' and 'from below' after Ritschl. Rahner employs the concept 'from below' in *Schriften zur Theologie I* in 1954 which is published in English in 1961 under the title *Theological Investigation I*. The phrase 'from below' appears to describe the christology which begins with human experience of Jesus in reference to some biblical passages.<sup>27</sup> Rahner refers to Acts 2:36 as representing the oldest of all the christologies 'from below'. Of course it is often thought that Peter's christology was 'primitive' and that it was soon superseded by the more sophisticated Pauline christology. The christology of Acts is even considered to be adoptionist. Yet Rahner insists that a human being is not only a corporeal and historical entity which is absolutely terminated quantity on earth, but it 'absolutely open upwards' and 'reaches its highest perfection' when the Logos Himself becomes existent in it in the world. If this view of human transcendence

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<sup>23</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* 393, cf. 2-22, 203-211.

<sup>24</sup> Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* 394 ea.

<sup>25</sup> '... we know the nature of God and Christ only in their worth for us' (Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* 212).

<sup>26</sup> Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* 398-399.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 2:21-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12:27; 5:29-32; 7:56; 9:22; 10:34-43; 13:28-41; 17:31; 18:28 (Karl Rahner, 'Current Problem in Christology' in: *Theological Investigation I* [London: Darton and Longman Todd, 1961], p. 155).

is accepted, then it is also possible to build a christology 'from below' up starting from a 'dynamic anthropology.'<sup>28</sup>

Rahner further develops this notion 'from below' more specifically in contrast to the concept 'from above' in 1972.<sup>29</sup> Here he writes that, there are *the*<sup>30</sup> two types of christology, that is, the 'from above' and the 'from below'. While Rahner calls the christology 'from above' as 'descending' or 'metaphysical' christology, he calls the christology 'from below' as 'ascending' christology, that is, the christology of 'saving history.'<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> (Rahner, 'The Current Problem in Christology' in: *Theological Investigation I* [1961], pp. 147-200, esp. pp. 183-188; cf. also 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Christ,' *Theological Investigations 3* [1967], pp. 35-46; 'Remarks on the Importance of the History of Jesus for Catholic Dogmatics' in: *Theological Investigation 13* [1975], pp. 201-212). Incidentally, this 'self-transcendence' or 'openness' of humankind towards God is one of the key concepts for Rahner's Theology and christology.

However, Gunton contends that Rahner's christology is problematic and obscure because it is not a full account of orthodox christology, even though Gunton does not clearly spell out what he means by this term. Moreover, Rahner's christology is an Antiochene christology in which the human Jesus is seen as a special case as far as the possibilities for grace inherent in all human existence is concerned. Rahner's weakness, according to Gunton, lies in his concept of 'human transcendence' since it creates 'a gulf between the New Testament picture of Jesus and forms of human self-assessment drawing heavily on existentialist and other modern traditions' (Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 12-13, 15). For Gunton's overall critical reflection on Rahner's christology consult pp. 10-18 (*ibid*).

<sup>29</sup> Karl Rahner, 'The Two Basic Types of Christology' in: *Theological Investigation XIII* (London: Darton and Longman, [1972] 1975), pp. 213-224. (=Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology*)

<sup>30</sup> But as for Tracy, christologies operating in these two typical paradigms are not exhaustive options for contemporary christology for at least two reasons: 1) these two types of christology overlap each other; 2) christology, as a human language, cannot capture or exactly reproduce the words and deeds of Jesus, but it is a 're-presentative limit language' (Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* 217-223, 233-236).

<sup>31</sup> (Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology* 213-214). Here we see an example of our initial statement about how broad and subtle the phrase 'from above/from below' is to define. Rahner, about four years later in this discussion, uses another concept of 'transcendence' in christology. By this 'transcendental' christology he means 'from below'. However, this 'from below' christology differs from the one which is being discussed in these two types of christology. While the christology 'from below', in these two types, means one which begins with the humanity of Christ itself, the 'from below' christology, in terms of the 'transcendental' christology, means one built on the *human experience* of Jesus, which asks about the *a priori* possibilities in *human beings* instead of in Jesus. Within the 'transcendental' christology, the 'from below' christology is an attempt to understand Christ with what human beings have already found in Jesus of Nazareth, which is a 'finality' and 'dynamism' imparted by God Himself towards God's self-communication (Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. Dych, William V. [London: Darton Longman



On the one hand, the 'from below' christology focuses on the life-act of Jesus. The life-act of Jesus of Nazareth is the content of the specifically Christian experience of saving history. This implies that for the 'from below' christology Jesus of Nazareth is not 'an' utterance of God to human beings which always remains at the level of the provisional and conditional turning of God to human beings, but rather *the* definitive, eschatological utterance of God to human beings. The point of departure for this 'from below' christology is, therefore, the simple experience of the man Jesus of Nazareth, and of the Resurrection. It is from this man Jesus of Nazareth that human beings encounter their existential quest for salvation.<sup>32</sup> Where Jesus is present in this sense there exists an orthodoxy too - a Chalcedonian christology. In other words, this 'from below' christology is from the outset seen within the context of the individuals' quest for salvation in the concrete human conditions of his life, and thus the world as such does not enter into the question. In this 'from below' christology, the world is to be understood as the stage for this saving event.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, Rahner understands that the 'from above' christology, the 'metaphysical' christology, is inevitable if the christology clearly goes beyond the original experience of Jesus by the believer whether or not it is justifiable. The 'from above' christology finds its point of departure and the possibility of verifying it, in the 'from below' christology. Yet this 'from above' christology constitutes something more than a mere inversion of the 'from below' christology. The pre-existence of the Logos, His divinity, is regarded as manifestly belonging to him from the first. This pre-existent Logos, the Son of God, descends from heaven and

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& Todd, 1978<sup>1</sup>], pp. 206-212). (=Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*)

<sup>32</sup> Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology* 215.

<sup>33</sup> Also, in this 'from below' christology, the promise of the Spirit, given through Jesus, signifies not merely the salvation of human beings, but rather the self-communication of the absolute God, present in Jesus, with human beings (Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology* 216). Thüsing further intensifies Rahner's transcendental christology on the basis of Scripture (Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, *A New Christology*, trans. D. Smith and V. Green [London: Burns & Oates, 1980], pp. 59-68).

assumes a human reality as his own.<sup>34</sup>

The decisive factors in this 'from above' christology are twofold. *Firstly*, it proceeds from something that is self-evident and does not need any further recourse to the experience of Jesus in saving history, that is, a doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Logos, as the pre-existing Son of God. These proceeding bases are not grounded on the experience in saving history of the crucified and risen Jesus, but made known through verbal teaching by this same Jesus, a teaching which is regarded as His *ipsissima verba*. This 'from above' christology is not a justifiable interpretation of a more original experience of saving history, but the supreme and primary 'axiom' of its christology, though we are aware that there is history behind the revelation of this axiom itself.

*Secondly*, unlike the 'from below' christology, this 'from above' christology implies a doctrine concerning the cosmic and transcendental significance of the Incarnation. Further, this process of becoming a human being constitutes more than a mere isolated event marking a particular time and space and belonging to a particular category, but rather this 'from above' christology is the supreme point in the relationship of the divine Logos to his world in general. The creation is then regarded as the enabling condition for the self-communication of God which opens itself to receive its own glory. The Incarnation is not so much an event in space and time, simply requiring to be accepted in its actuality, but is rather the supreme point of a transcendental, albeit free, relationship of God to the creation, His personal history of love within it. Saving history, the 'from below' christology, is embraced and integrated within a relationship of God to the world.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly, as Colin E. Gunton has pointed out, Rahner's christological method is problematic. Rahner's attempt arose in order to safeguard the full humanity of Christ with the rest of humankind, and as such to avoid the orthodox

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<sup>34</sup> Rahner sees these basic forms of christology in the christological hymns of the Pauline Epistles and in the Prologue to the Johannine Gospel (Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology* 217).

<sup>35</sup> Rahner, *The Two Basic Types of Christology* 218-219.

tradition's frequent tendency towards docetic christology. But if Jesus is *fully* a human being, it is difficult to speak of the absolute uniqueness of Jesus. We will have to speak of the uniqueness of Jesus' humanity in degree, and not in kind.<sup>36</sup> Rahner's christology 'from below' then operates with the presupposition that the significance of Jesus consists in His having a large degree of human qualities. That is to say, Jesus' divine significance is grounded in His supreme human qualities. The problem is that this view presupposes the fact that to be divine is to be successfully human. Conversely speaking, this presupposition also implies the fact that in some sense to be human is already to share divinity. All humankind is already incipiently divine by virtue of some feature of their being. The divinity of Christ is bringing this innate quality to its perfection demonstrating the supreme degree of what humankind is already. Therefore, the humanity of Christ is different from that of all humankind not in principle or in kind, but in degree. Gunton further argues that if Jesus' significance is based on His superior human qualities to us, then we repeat the weakness of traditional christology, that is, that He is no longer truly one of us because this Jesus is so different from us.<sup>37</sup>

Whether or not we agree with Karl Rahner's analysis it must be noted that it was he who explicitly formulated the distinction between 'from above' and 'from below' in contemporary theology. At this point, we have to ask what made Rahner employ this approach of 'from below' in christology. If we agree that theology is a human activity, then we must also conclude that theology does not emerge out of thin air but out of a certain context. Theology is not a static text or object given from outside any human context; rather, all theology is a *dynamic process* arising out of specific world contexts, and this is the reason why we do not claim our

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<sup>36</sup> Robinson and Rahner prefer 'degree christology' to 'kind christology' in order to safeguard Christ's true humanity within the rest of all humankind (J.A.T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* 209-210). 'A degree Christology operating from below reproduces the methodological features of some ancient Christology from above' (Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 53). The problem of 'degree christology' is that it, as an 'inverted Arianism or Docetism from below,' represents a divinised human being rather a humanised Logos (*ibid.*, 53).

<sup>37</sup> Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 11-18.

theologies to be any kind of 'canonic theology' but we affirm them to be a *theologia viatorum*. This implies that all theology is a human reflection upon its own contextual ethos or concern. Such an awareness necessitates a brief sketch of some of the theological background to, and reasons<sup>38</sup> for, the emergence of the 'from above/from below' issue before we advance our thesis. Further, our dealing with some theological reasons for and background to the interest in christology 'from below' is inevitable, since this will demonstrate how important our thesis is.

## 2. **Some Theological Background and Reasons for the Rise of the Issue 'from below'**

The rise of the christology 'from below' is, *firstly*, associated with Barth's theological paradigm shift. Nineteenth century theology was dominated by a positive humanism. This humanism suggested (with the emergence of Schleiermacher's theology which is understood as the representative of the nineteenth century's theological liberalism in particular) that humankind could manage its life, culture, and history in such a successful manner that God has little to do for them. Overshadowed by such a positive humanism, Christian christology too became much more interested in the humanity of Christ than in the unintelligible and inexpressible 'divine being' in order either to justify or to test current positive humanism. Humankind now stands in the centre of its life and history, whereas God stands on the periphery.<sup>39</sup> But such a positive humanism was completely shattered by the two World Wars, since humanity has experienced the brutality and

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<sup>38</sup> Of course there could be more factors than our discussions here which underlie the issue. For a brief sketch of theological roots for the re-emphasis on the humanity of Christ see (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 243-245; David G.A. Calvert, *From Christ to God* [London: Epworth Press, 1983], pp. 3-5). (=Calvert, *From Christ to God*). Calvert sees that, whereas 19th-century liberalism thought it could recover the historical Jesus, 20th-century liberalism thought it could not be done satisfactorily (*ibid.*, 4).

<sup>39</sup> See Barth's criticism on the optimistic humanism in (*From Rousseau to Ritschl* 11-57).

destructiveness of humanity rather than its goodness. Moreover, as the first and the second Wars were supported by many Church leaders and theologians particularly in Germany, Western Christianity did not know how to understand their God, and therefore what to say to the world about their faith, Church, culture, and history. The reason was that the support of many in the Western Church for such terrible Wars was in contrast to their preaching of the 'Gospel', hence, Western Christianity was in great need of a reshaping of its understandings of God, faith, and history in the face of theological and ethical challenges.

To this theological and ethical impasse Barth announced the 'infinite qualitative distance' between God and humankind, God and Church, and God and human history and culture. Humankind can know God only when He reveals Himself. God is 'wholly other' who breaks in upon it 'perpendicularly from above.' Barth introduced these concepts of 'infinite distance' and of the 'wholly other' in order to say that Christian activities cannot be identified with the act of God, however sincere or faithful such activities may be. Thus the primary concern of theology became God and His act instead of human beings and their culture, history, and faith. This change of primary concern in theology led christology to re-build itself with the presupposition that Christ is God incarnated 'from above' instead of building christology with a view to the human life-act 'from below'. However, as Barth had later acknowledged that his early view of the 'wholly otherness' of God was partly wrong, the emphasis on the humanity of Christ resurfaced in an effort to present Jesus as our contemporary.

Secondly, the emphasis on the christology 'from below' received support from New Testament scholarship.<sup>40</sup> Jesus was not a mythically fabricated figure

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<sup>40</sup> See (Matthew Black, *A Survey of Christological Thought 1872-1972* [Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1972]). (=Black, *A Survey of Christological Thought*); John Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ*; for a good summary of sources and theological sketches of the issue see also (G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* [Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993 [=1974]], pp. 1-20, 170-180).



but one who shared the specific culture and tradition of His time as a human being.<sup>41</sup> This view of Jesus led some scholars to challenge the sceptical view of the historical Jesus, the historicity of Jesus, with a new question.

Studies about the historical Jesus concluded that it is not possible to reconstruct the historical man.<sup>42</sup> This quest was mainly the quest of the 'what (who) of Jesus' in terms of the modern understanding of history and biography. This quest was called the 'old' quest. Yet, as an attempt to overcome the impasse of the historical quest, scholars raised two fundamental questions: 1) We cannot assume that the early Church community's cognizance of 'history' is the same as the modern one. We cannot impose our modern understanding of 'history' upon them. Hence form-criticism's negative conclusion about the historical Jesus cannot be the final answer to the question of its reliability; 2) The interest in the historical Jesus arose primarily out of the uniqueness of His *life-act*. In other words, Jesus has been remembered throughout the ages because of the *way* in which He lived. Then our christological question initially must be about 'how (why)' prior to the 'what (who).' This is called the 'new' quest.<sup>43</sup> Asking this 'new' quest for 'how

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<sup>41</sup> For example (Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* 22-44; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* [London: Collins, 1973], pp. 15-102). Yet we may point out that Vermes' view, relying mainly on the Gospel narratives and the writings of Flavius Josephus, is made without their source and content critique, assuming that these sources are 'reliable'.

<sup>42</sup> Originally, this 'old' quest of the historical Jesus was raised by M. Kähler (*Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre, von dem evangelischen Grundartikel aus im Abriss dargestellt*, Leipzig, 1883 [=1905<sup>3</sup>]). But A. Schweitzer's book on *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) became more widely known as the 'classic' volume of the 'old' quest. Both Kähler and Schweitzer's sceptical view of the historical Jesus is more radicalised by R. Bultmann's demythologisation (*Jesus* [1926] = *Jesus and the Word* [1935]; *The New Testament and Mythology* [1941]); for a survey of the issue of the historical Jesus consult James P. Mackey's *Jesus the Man and the Myth. A Contemporary Christology* [SCM Press, 1979], pp. 10-51; for an overall summary of Bultmann's christology and theology see David Fergusson, *Bultmann* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992], pp. esp. 14-19, 73-80, 107-125).

As for Black, Bultmann's understanding of Christ in the New Testament as mythological is a 'twentieth-century docetism' (Black, *A Survey of Christological Thought* 14).

<sup>43</sup> For an account of the nature of the 'new' quest of the historical Jesus, of its theological significance, and of the problem of understanding 'history,' see (James M. Robinson, 'A New Quest of the Historical Jesus' in: *Study in Biblical Theology* No. 25 [London: SCM Press, 1959], pp.9-125; 'Bultmann himself has conceded in a letter to me the possibility and legitimacy of the [new] quest' (Robinson, 'The Historical Question' in: *The Christian Century* [October 21, 1959], LXXVI, 1210).

(why)' naturally drew an attention to the humanity of Christ. This indicated that the concrete life-act of the humanity of Christ would sufficiently vindicate the reliability of believing in Him although it may not be fully sufficient. As the concrete life-act sufficiently authenticates the historical Jesus, His teaching may

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Interestingly enough, this 'new' quest was raised by the Bultmann's students: (Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Hodder and Stoughton 1960; Ernst Käsemann and Ernst Fuchs, in *Studies in Biblical Theology series no. 41 & 42*), although Hans Conzelmann maintains Bultmann's sympathetic scepticism of the historical Jesus by omitting the historical aspect of Jesus in his book on (*An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. J. Bowden [London: SCM Press, 1969]; from *Grundriss der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1968]).

Nevertheless, both Van Harvey and Ogden are sceptical of Robinson's description of the issue as the 'new' quest. They maintain that the problem of Robinson's contention is found in the view that while he, in reference to Bultmann, holds that the 'old' quest is impossible and illegitimate, the 'new' quest is possible and legitimate. In point of fact, the 'old' quest is concerned basically with 'the what' or 'the true fact' of Jesus' sayings and deeds, whereas the 'new' quest is an attempt to authenticate the sayings and deeds of Jesus in terms of 'how' he lived. But if we cannot really authenticate the 'old' quest, that is, 'the what' or 'the true fact', we cannot dare to ask 'how' Jesus lived. Robinson makes claims for the legitimacy of the 'new' quest by turning to Bultmann's endorsement. But this claim is not only mistaken since there is no real 'shift' or 'concession' in Bultmann's position of the historical Jesus to admit the possibility and legitimacy of the 'new' quest throughout his writings, but Robinson also failed in providing sufficient evidence for Bultmann's 'shift' or 'concession' from the 'old' to the 'new,' because Bultmann has not changed his position regarding the impossibility and illegitimacy at all, in questioning the historical Jesus. Moreover there is virtually no difference between Bultmann and Bornkamm's position either, even though Robinson supposes there is. Accordingly 'the new quest hardly seems to be new at all.' (Van Harvey and Schubert Ogden, 'How New is the "New Quest of the Historical Jesus"?' in: *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ. Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. & ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 197-242; from 'Wie neu ist die "Neue Frage nach dem historischen Jesus"?' in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]; *The Point of Christology* [London: SCM Press, 1982], pp. 48-51). '... if there is really anything new about the "new quest," it lies decisively in the realm of dogmatic interests motivating it and their more precise characterisation' (E. Käsemann, 'Die neue Jesus-Frage' in: *Jesus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. Jean Dupont. Gembloux: J. Duculot: 52, cf. 47-57. This text is cited by Schubert M. Ogden, *The Point of Christology* 50)

Pittenger classifies 'history' in two categories: the history deduced from the available evidence, and the history of which the precise details are not as clear as we would wish to have but which are simply 'ploughed into' succeeding ages. And the historicity of Jesus lies in these 'double histories' (*Christology Reconsidered* 24-25).

It should be noted, incidentally, that Bultmann was not entirely sceptical about the historicity of Jesus as can be seen by the fact that he stresses that we know much about the historical figure although this historicity lacks the knowledge of Jesus' personality and biography (Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*). Such an affirmation leads Pittenger to assert that 'the genius of Christianity lies precisely in the claim that the Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of faith, the Christ of faith is the Jesus of history' (Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* 33, 22-44).

even reflect His personality as well.

Thirdly, a new interest in the christology 'from below' emerged partly due to a struggle to find out a new and more dynamic model for thinking about God. This new struggle derives from the advent of Marxism, which criticised Christianity maintaining the traditional view of God. According to Marxism, the God of Christianity does not solve the socio-economic problem of human beings. The traditional idea of God held by Christianity cannot help its contemporary socio-economic problems. Not every Marxist could 'believe' in the 'saviour', because the historical-materialist method rather determined (shaped) the 'saviour' of Christianity. The Judaeo-Christian tradition has been concerned with the problems which contributed certain models towards their solution.<sup>44</sup> In this view Marxism, as a 'counter-ideal-to-God', emphasised that it is humankind, not God with all his intellectual and spiritual gifts and values, who 'solves' human problems.<sup>45</sup>

Such a struggle to find a more relevant model for thinking about God by means of human capacity led Marxist scholarship to turn to the humanity of Christ. According to Marxism, the genuinely historical Jesus must have been affected by

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<sup>44</sup> Milan Machoveč, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976<sup>1</sup>), pp. 24, 29. (=Machoveč, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*)

<sup>45</sup> Marxists' rejection of the God of traditional Christianity corresponds exactly to Feuerbach's critique of Christianity's God: 'The personality of God is nothing else other than the projected personality of man' (Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957], p. 226, cf. pp. 33-43, 120-134, 140-149, 226-231). This rejection of a traditionally-understood God by Christianity was the context of Marx's critique of religion as 'opium.' Incidentally, Machoveč also joins the critiques of Feuerbach and Marx, accusing Christianity of being 'quasi-revolutionary' and 'non-conformist' towards the message of Jesus Christ (Machoveč, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* 193-194, 197-198, 200).

Here we must remember that Barth was sympathetic to Feuerbach's critique of the faith of the traditional Christianity. This was because, according to Barth, the one who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is not, in many ways, the God of the traditional Church and Christianity overall since Christianity manipulated God and disobeyed Him instead of listening to Him. Barth's sympathy with Feuerbach and Marx is well indicated in his harsh critique of religion as 'unbelief,' since religion is a human attempt at divinising itself (CD I/2, 280-361, esp. 297-325; see also Barth's preface on Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* x-xxx). Also, H. Richard Niebuhr points out that both Feuerbach and Barth agree that, to have faith in Christianity itself is to put one's trust in something human, personal, and social, but they disagree in that whereas Feuerbach can believe in humanity Barth cannot (*ibid.*, viii).



a specific culture, place, and milieu of His time. Thus for them to execute a proper christology meant to be carrying out a christology which is concerned chiefly with this culturally and historically conditioned humanity and act of Jesus, rather than any presupposed or preconceived idea of Christ.<sup>46</sup>

*Fourthly*, the articulation of the christology 'from below' arose out of an apologetic reasoning. The traditional God-language: the eternal Logos or Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, is not intelligible to many people in a secular age. So what could offer a readily accessible starting-point for christology is not an ambiguous God or Church dogma, but the humanity of Christ, who truly shared His life with all mankind. In short, much interest in 'doing' christology with a view to the earthly aspect of Christ rather than the assumed divine aspect of Christ is partly a conscientious reaction to the inadequacy and unintelligibility of the traditional God-language.<sup>47</sup>

The *fifth* reason for the emphasis on the christology 'from below' has to do with a doctrinal problem. If the divinity of Christ outshines His humanity, this christology would result in a kind of Doceticism and Gnosticism irrespective of its intention. Docetic and Gnostic christology cannot stand, because Christ without full or true humanity is irrelevant to the human condition.<sup>48</sup>

The *sixth* theological background of the emergence of the christology 'from below' is rooted in the strain of Western thought, theology and philosophy. 'Faced

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<sup>46</sup> (M. Machoveč, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* 119-120, 198-199; See also Vítězslav Gardavský, *God is Not Yet Dead* [Pelican Books, 1973], pp. 34-52). The problem inherent in this view is that if christology is going to be determined mainly by the culturally and historically conditioned humanity of Christ, then Christianity's confession that 'Jesus is the universal Christ' could be understood as if the universality of Christ is not real in Christ Himself but merely a Christian ascription. Calvert sees this approach as one of the key problems that such a stress on the reality of Jesus' humanity creates. An emphasis on the ordinariness of the humanity of Christ necessarily raises the questions why and how the confession of his divinity could properly have arisen (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 5).

<sup>47</sup> See Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 244-245, 249; Calvert, *From Christ to God* 5.

<sup>48</sup> 'Only one who has fully shared the human condition can have any convincing significance as a Mediator or High Priest, as the Epistle to the Hebrews shows' (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 244).

with a loss of confidence in traditional ways of ascribing the source of Jesus's significance to a transcendent world, theologians in this tradition sought the divine in history, in human mind, or in human moral striving.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, ever since Augustine, Western theology has tended to conceptualise its belief; for Western theology, faith or revelation alone was not enough to convince it; faith or revelation has to be clarified by reason. As a result, 'doing' theology has often been a discipline of conceptualisation rather than a holistic discipline of both theory (theologising) and *praxis* (realising).<sup>50</sup>

We find that the *seventh* reason for an interest of the christology 'from below' is also triggered by the question of epistemology, and as such methodology. Christology 'from above' downwards presupposes a pre-existent Being as the Being who should come down from somewhere. The problem is that we cannot know whether such a Being pre-existed, nor can we assume that this Being was God even if such a Being actually pre-existed before the creation. So we cannot know or approach any christology unless we also take part in the process of this Being's coming down 'from above' downwards. Therefore an alternative to 'doing' christology is first to approach christology from the human aspect of Christ, 'from below', and subsequently to conclude that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, was Christ who came 'from above' as the second person of the Trinity.<sup>51</sup>

Having introduced the implicit and explicit initiators of, some theological background to, and reasons for the issue 'from above/from below', we will now turn to Barth's interpreters' understanding of 'from above/from below' in order to proceed further with our thesis.

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<sup>49</sup> Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 16.

<sup>50</sup> Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 28.

<sup>51</sup> This epistemological and methodic problem is raised by Wolfhart Pannenberg, and we will resume this issue in chapter two.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Christology 'from above' An Analysis of the Views of Karl Barth's Interpreters**

The task of this chapter is to introduce and analyse a series of diverse understandings of Barth's christology. The analysis raises questions, questions which require our special attention since they put forward to us the interest and direction of our thesis. In limiting the scope of our thesis we will be selective in our analysis of the views of Barth's interpreters. No doubt there will be more scholars who would advocate Barth as sustaining a 'high' christology apart from the scholars who are going to be mentioned in our discussion. But we believe, unless we are mistaken, that it would not do much harm to our thesis to say that the rest of the unquoted scholars would also fall more or less into one of these categories.

#### **I. An Analysis of the Views of Barth Interpreters**

##### **1. Christology 'from above' in terms of holding the Primacy of the Incarnation of the Logos 'from heaven' in Christology, viz. in view of the Method of Approach**

One of the most common grounds for labeling Barth's christology as a 'high' christology is his 'Logos christology.' According to Philip J. Rosato, Barth holds a christology 'from above' because he advocates 'Logos christology,' a christology which focuses primarily upon the incarnation of the *Logos*. Logos by no means refers to an earthly, visible, and tangible 'low' existence, but contains purely a concept of a certain 'high' being or reality. Thus, by calling Barth's christology a 'Logos christology,' Rosato denotes that Barth holds a christology 'from above'. He is however somewhat sympathetic to Barth's christological stance, and does acknowledge that, to a certain extent, he has some element of 'Spirit christology' which signals for Rosato somewhat a christology 'from below'. Rosato's designation of 'Spirit christology' as a christology 'from below', however, is surprising, for Spirit is an entirely metaphysical concept. Spirit christology is a metaphysical christology which can then hardly be thought of as a 'low' christology

from any traditional point of view. Rosato believes such a designation as legitimate by identifying physical being (Jesus) with metaphysical being (Spirit). His insistence on such an identification stands under a doctrinal presupposition, of the Trinity. Simply put, if God is truly the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit must be one God with the Son and the Father. Yet, Rosato's intention in stressing such an identification is not to argue or to develop the doctrine of the Trinity so to speak, but rather to single out the importance of the Spirit and therefore, to criticise Barth's weakness in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his dogmatics in light of the doctrine of the Trinity. Rosato's book *The Spirit as Lord* is about this critique.<sup>1</sup> Anyway, we need to analyse Rosato's understanding of Barth's christology because he does claim overall that Barth has a christology 'from above' rather than 'from below'.

Rosato proposes that, for Barth, the primary ground of Jesus' divinity is not His anointing with the Spirit, but the 'hypostatic union' of the two natures. He feels that Barth unnecessarily suppressed pneumatology for the sake of christology due to his preference for an 'unmitigated Logos Christology.'<sup>2</sup> Rosato states:

Barth's own choice of an unmistakable christology 'from above' which is reinforced by a pervasive Word theology risks the opposite danger of coming too close to a Gnostic concept of the eternal Word in the process of realising itself throughout natural and human history. The choice of such a Logos christology ... does not adequately do justice to the biblical notion that the Father broke His silence and poured out His Spirit in full measure on Jesus Christ. ... his exaggerated Logos christology seems blatantly to bypass the biblically attested truth that

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<sup>1</sup> For an appreciative and yet constructive criticisms on Rosato's interpretation of Barth see (John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1991], pp. 197-211).

<sup>2</sup> (Philip J. Rosato. *The Spirit as Lord; The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981], p. 174). (=Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*)

Even a radical criticism is made by Sykes regarding this Logos-flesh christology as Barth's proof of textual errors for two reasons: *Firstly*, the Prologue of John the Gospel, especially 1:14 which Barth proposes as 'the central New Testament statement (CD I/2, 132),' is not a historical statement but a theological statement. Moreover, it is written by the Gnostic, Valentinus. *Secondly*, the christology of John tends to be 'docetic' banking heavily on theological judgments thereby its historical force is correspondingly diminished (S.W. Sykes, 'Barth on the Centre of Theology' in: *Karl Barth-Studies of his Theological Methods* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], pp. 48-49). While Hodgson rather, throughout his book, escalates the vitality of the Logos concept in theology and christology arguing that the real meaning is not studied seriously and properly enough (Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971]).

Christ must be understood in the context of God the Spirit's continual interactions with man ...<sup>3</sup>

This is a neat argument, and unless we attend to what Barth said in his christology, we could simply assume Rosato's observation as accurate. Yet the danger and opacity of this observation will be dismantled as we raise the question as to whether Barth's 'Logos christology' necessarily undergirds Rosato's claim that Barth has a christology 'from above', and whether Rosato perceives what Barth *means* by the 'Logos christology'. Did Barth really 'exaggerate' Logos christology so as to 'blatantly bypass' the biblical truth? Furthermore, Rosato presumes that Barth would have objected to beginning his christology with the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth due to a fear that such a christological model would conclude with nothing other than the affirmation of Jesus' humanity.<sup>4</sup> This view invites the further question of whether this presumptive view does not considerably reduce the theological significance of the life-act of the *Royal Man*. What if Barth highlights the life-act of the Jesus of Nazareth, the *Royal Man*, as *the* only verifiable basis for an understanding of the revealed God? And what of Barth's clear cut articulation of Jesus Christ being the *vere Deus et vere homo*? These issues will be addressed later.

David G.A. Calvert too presents Barth as having a christology 'from above'

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<sup>3</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord* 174.

<sup>4</sup> (Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord* 176). Similarly, Puffenberger implicitly accuses Barth of having a christology 'from above' by insisting that 'Barth cannot begin with the historical Jesus Christ and then argue that God was in Christ. ... [Since] Barth significantly devotes a full forty pages to the theological exegesis of the text of John 1:14 (CD I/2, 132-171).' However, we see the quoted text rather differently. What Barth wants to say is not like a christology 'from above' in terms of the incarnation of the Logos, but rather to show *how* the Word could become flesh so as to emphasise His union with the human being in Jesus Christ. For this reason, Barth explicates 'The Word became flesh (Jn 1:14)' in a separate way: 'The Word,' 'became,' and 'flesh' with *equal* articulation. Further, Puffenberger apparently misses Barth's ensuing statement in the same text that 'Every question concerning the Word which is directed away from Jesus of Nazareth, the human being of Jesus Christ, is necessarily and wholly directed away from Himself, the Word, and therefore from God Himself, because the Word, and therefore God Himself, does not exist for us apart from the human being Jesus Christ' (CD I/1, 166). (William V. Puffenberger, *The Word of God and Hermeneutics in the Theologies of Karl Barth and Gerhard Ebeling* [Boston: Boston University Press, 1968], pp. 95-103, esp. 97). Having said this we sympathise with Puffenberger's contention since his book does not cover late Barth at all, and in particular his christology.



by insisting that, for Barth, the concept of incarnation stands at the very centre of his christology. Perhaps for a similar reason, Peter C. Hodgson also puts Barth within this line 'from above', without expanding this argument further however.<sup>5</sup> According to Calvert, Barth combines the event of incarnation with the language of the descent and ascent of the Son of God. Behind such an incarnational christology Barth develops his doctrine of the Trinity in order to answer the question of how the second person of the Trinity became a human being. The difficulty of such an approach, according to Calvert, is that it presupposes the divinity of Christ instead of presenting reasons for it. The approach 'from above' recognises the real, historical human being only with difficulty.<sup>6</sup>

Both Rosato and Calvert's contentions are concerned with a matter of methodology in approaching christology. This question of methodology is raised by Wolfhart Pannenberg. He categorises the concepts 'from above' ('high') and 'from below' ('low' christology) mainly in terms of the methods of approach. He asserts that christology 'from above' is intended to be one which primarily sets out the divinity of Christ in which the concept of incarnation stands in the centre of christology. 'Low' christology, on the other hand, begins with the historical Jesus, moving to the recognition of his divinity. Christology 'from below' is concerned chiefly with Jesus' 'message' and 'fate' and eventually leads to the concept of incarnation, the pre-existent divinity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1971], p. 61; similarly even though implicit by James H. Cone, *The God of the Oppressed* [New York: The Seabury Press, 1975], p. 130.

<sup>6</sup> Calvert, *From Christ to God* 13.

<sup>7</sup> (Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* 33). So Pannenberg attempts to build his christology 'from below', building a christology from Jesus' words and deeds.

Nonetheless, an incongruity of his argument appears when he states that '... while Christology must begin with the man Jesus, its *first* question has to be that about his unity with God. ... The specific element in the Christological question about Jesus ... does not begin with some preliminary aspect of his words and deeds or his effects on men, but with his relation to God ... . Individual aspects of his work and message as well as of his fate are *then* to be evaluated in this context' (*ibid.*, 36 ea). Then Pannenberg finds Jesus' unity with God not in an analysis of His words and deeds, but in His resurrection.

Hodgson describes, in recognition of such a discrepancy, that 'The historical materials with which Pannenberg starts in his effort to "prove" the divinity of Jesus are drawn from the Easter



Given such an understanding of the 'from above' and the 'from below', Pannenberg bluntly asserts that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above'.<sup>8</sup> His reason is that Barth speaks about a 'history of incarnation': the humiliation of the Son of God (CD IV/1) and the exaltation of the Son of Man (CD IV/2). Then Barth combines both the two natures of, Jesus as God and man, and the doctrine of humiliation and exaltation of the incarnate Son of God. Pannenberg points out that this combination comes close to 'the basic outline of the Gnostic redeemer myth.'<sup>9</sup>

Our question is whether, for Barth, the ground of epistemology precedes his methodology of approach. Would Pannenberg's judgement be tenable if, for Barth, the christological *Sache*, a well defined or refined content, determines his christological approach? We question the labelling of Barth's christology as a 'high' christology purely on account of the method of christological approach, particularly when we recognise the fact that Barth never absolutised his christological scheme, e.g. his method of christological approach. These questions will be addressed later. So far, it may be noted that it is our intention to demonstrate that Barth has been accused of having a christology 'from above' mainly on account of his method of christological approach.

According to Pannenberg, the characteristic of a christology 'from above' is that the doctrine of the Trinity is assumed. On this presupposition, the christology 'from above' asks: 'how has the second person of the Trinity, the Logos, assumed a human nature?'<sup>10</sup> What Pannenberg means by this contention is that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above', as his christology begins with this *presupposed* Godhead (Trinity) 'from above'. Seen from the perspective of the approaching method, it is true that Barth lays the doctrine of the Trinity as

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traditions, not from the earthly ministry of Jesus. To get to the "above," Pannenberg in effect, starts from above: the divine demonstration of the divinity (or divine sonship) of Jesus by means of his resurrection from the dead' (Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* 21).

<sup>8</sup> Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* 33-37.

<sup>9</sup> Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* 34.

the christological ground and then sets it forth as the ontology of christology before the discussion about christology *per se*. However, Barth's christology is not to be understood entirely in terms of the method of approach. We therefore have to ask whether Barth's christology does not go beyond this category of the method of approach. That is to say, how would Pannenberg adequately reply to Barth's consistent emphasis that the doctrine of the Trinity is nothing other than the 'exposition of revelation'?<sup>11</sup> What implications would Pannenberg draw from Barth's emphasis?

John Macquarrie is another figure who marks Barth's christology as a christology 'from above', in view of his christological method of approach. He argues that Barth begins his christology with the history of divine descent in the *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, and continues with human ascent in the *Church Dogmatics* IV/2. 'It was God who went into the far country, and it is man who returns home.'<sup>12</sup> However, the primary emphasis lies on the divine descent 'from heaven' ('from above') and not the human ascent from earth ('from below'). For Macquarrie, such a conventional model is an obvious reason for sealing Barth's christology as a 'high' one. He consequently explicitly describes Barth's christology thus, '... Barth's christology is ... a 'christology from above', that is to say, it follows the classical pattern of speaking first of Christ's descent from the Father, and then of his return.'<sup>13</sup> Macquarrie is correct in so far as this is the

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<sup>11</sup> Yet McIntyre points out that Barth's exposition of revelation is 'quite unhistorical' in its character (John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* [SCM Press, 1966], p. 159).

Küng perceives such an unhistorical approach of Barth's as inevitable as his theological epistemology depended radically on Anselm's dictum: *Fides quaerens intellectum* in which *credo ut intelligam* was found. Faith was defined as the knowledge and affirmation of the Word of Christ. But the problem was that this faith was quickly identified with the creed of Church. And Barth took this for granted as his dogmatic approach. *Church Dogmatics* now became the reflection upon the Creed, as already recited and affirmed. Consequently Barth elaborated the doctrine of the Trinity not from the Biblical witnesses but from the teaching of the 4th century (Hans Küng, 'Karl Barth after the Postmodern Paradigm' in: *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. 9, No. 1, [1988], p. 23).

<sup>12</sup> (CD IV/2, 21). Macquarrie's general critique of Barth's theology as a whole are quite agreeable (*ibid.*, pp. 278-288).

<sup>13</sup> John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: Trinity & SCM Press, 1990), p. 285. (= *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*)

pattern of Barth's description. Nevertheless, we ask whether the pattern itself is a justifiable enough basis for such an assertion. Should our utmost concern not be rather to understand christological, and as such, theological, *meaning, reasons, and implications* of the pattern employed particularly in Barth, rather than judging his christology in terms of the appearance of the employed pattern itself?

## 2. Christology 'from above' in view of the Rejection of 'Natural Theology'

A different reason for branding Barth's christology as a 'high' christology comes from a view of his rejection of 'natural theology'. This reason is again given by John Macquarrie. According to Macquarrie, the evidence of Barth having a christology 'from above' is found in his cognizance of *The Humanity of God* in Barth. Macquarrie acknowledges the modification of Barth's theology, and as such of his christology, from *The Epistle to the Romans* to *The Humanity of God*. Barth revises his early vigorous emphasis on the 'wholly otherness' of God in terms of the 'humanity of God,' and yet Macquarrie supposes that this modification does not make much difference to his early christological posture as 'from above'. So Macquarrie, in stamping Barth's christology as a 'high' christology in spite of his theological, and as such christological, emphasis on the humanity of God, depicts it in the following fashion: 'The latter book [*The Humanity of God*] allows for some affinity between God and man, and therefore for the possibility of something like incarnation.'<sup>14</sup> However, 'Though talk of the 'absolute qualitative difference' between God and man was muted, there was still, in Barth's view, no way from man to God, no natural theology.'<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Robert Jenson also presents Barth

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<sup>14</sup> Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 352; see also John Macquarrie, *S. Kierkegaard, The Point of View* (Harper & Row 1962), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> (Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 284). Matczak's summary on Barth's view of natural theology speaks well on its own, unless we count Barth's latest development on natural theology (CD IV/3.1) (Sebastian A. Matczak, *Karl Barth on God. The Knowledge of the Divine Existence* [London et al: St. Paul Publications, 1962], pp. 221-269).

as holding a 'high' christology on the grounds that Barth rejects 'Natural Theology'.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Paul Tillich sees Barth as having a 'high' christology on the basis of his disapproval of natural theology.<sup>17</sup> Tillich's critique of Barth is succinct and yet comprehensive enough to discuss. According to Tillich, Barth launches his whole theology and as such his christology with the 'otherness of God': 'God is in heaven and humankind is on earth'. There is no 'contact point' (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) between God and His creatures. Human beings cannot know God unless God reveals Himself. Consequently there is no way from human being to God, but only from God to human beings. Tillich declares: 'Thus the Barthian theology, from first to last, preserves the sovereign prerogative of God as expressed in the first commandment. God's sovereignty is not blended with any form of human existence and action.'<sup>18</sup> In short, Tillich's declaration of Barth maintaining a christology 'from above' stems from the perspective of Barth's rejection of 'natural theology'.

Basically, Tillich agrees with Barth. God is God and human beings are human beings. The kingly rule of God cannot be identified with human activities. The kingly rule of God is purely a 'transcendental' and 'eschatological quantum'.<sup>19</sup> As such, sound Christian theology can neither substitute the self-developing personality for the place of the sinner, the self-developing religious man Jesus for the place of Christ, or the self-developing religious consciousness of humanity for the place of the Word of God in Scripture.

However, Tillich's constant argument is that Barth's total repudiation of 'natural theology' and as such of 'cultural theology' is wrong, because God does not reveal Himself in a vacuum but in a tangible, visible, and experiential way. There must be something to be touched by God if God seeks to communicate

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<sup>16</sup> Jenson, *God after God* (Indianapolis, 1969), p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought. from Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), pp. 535-539, esp. 539.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Tillich, 'What is Wrong with the "Dialectic" Theology?' in: *TJR* (1935 April, Vol. XV no. 2), p. 135. (=Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 135)

<sup>19</sup> Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 134.

Himself with earthly human beings. If so, then Christian theology should recognise human beings and human reality such as culture, reason, history, and philosophy of religion, as an important and necessary means of divine communication.

Tillich makes a number of further criticisms. For example, the statement 'God is in heaven and human being is on earth' can be made only if heaven and earth have touched each other not only once, but continually in a process of history. Human being, in this process, may understand the statement sometimes rightly or sometimes wrongly. But this 'erring knowledge' cannot be regarded as an utter ignorance about God; a concept which is held by Barth. Barth transformed the whole history of religion into a "Witches' Sabbath" of ghostly fancies, idolatry, and superstition'<sup>20</sup> by undermining the value of erring knowledge about God.

Similarly, Tillich asks about human being in connection with Barth measuring nature, culture, and history by a human standard. Tillich's argument is that nature, culture, and history cannot be solely thought of apart from the divine. They concern themselves:

neither solely with God as a remote reality nor solely with human self-gloration, but with erring and questioning knowledge about God. ... 'natural theology' has very little to do with natural human wisdom in the general and formal sense. Perhaps the conception 'natural theology' is itself the product of a faulty supernaturalism.<sup>21</sup>

If revelation could not be received by means of human culture and human phenomena it would be 'a destructive foreign substance'<sup>22</sup> or 'a disruptive non-human entity' which could have had no power to shape and direct human history. Further, human perception tends to go beyond or transcend itself. But this

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<sup>20</sup> Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 138-139.

<sup>21</sup> (Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 139-140). The theme of Tillich's whole article is that Barth's theology is a 'supernaturalistic theology' rather than a 'dialectic theology'. See pp. 127-145 (*ibid*).

<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, as for Barth, the power which converts people to Christianity derives from the noetic power of the resurrection. There is a sovereignly operative power of revelation, of the transition from Him to humankind, and therefore of His communication with humankind. But the work of this power is not to destroy our earthliness, but to give a new determination (CD IV/2, 318). Of course Barth does not offer any clear answer to the question 'how', which is certainly a difficult one to reply to. For theology, which speaks about the divine there always exists mystery. Also, theology is primarily not a matter of scientific or logical proof, but of witness or confession. Thus theological language will be eventually either sceptical language or doxological language.

transcendentalising by no means suggests that human beings possess God or His transcendence. Humanity raises the question of God and transcendence. Also, this query is possible only because the transcendental draws us out beyond ourselves.<sup>23</sup> Tillich agrees with Barth to the point that theology is not anthropology as if it surrendered itself into the thought of Feuerbach. But theology is the answer to the anthropological question. So Tillich writes: 'In general, Barth leaves unexplained how revelation can communicate anything to man if there is nothing in him permitting him to raise questions about it, impelling him toward it, and enabling him to understand it.'<sup>24</sup> Further, Barth' playing down of the historical-critical method stands in danger of making his christology another type of the very mysticism that he rejected. Revelation can neither be called into question nor established by means of historical criticism. Yet the content of the event of revelation is passed on to us by historically bound witnesses. So the original meaning of the text must first be interpreted. We cannot simply repeat the scriptural texts without undertaking the critical process. Tillich thus says that 'Barth quite properly makes his christology and his teaching about the word of God independent of the results of historical criticism.'<sup>25</sup> In short, Barth's christology is a christology 'from above', because Barth builds his christology only upon the vertical power of divine initiative from the 'heaven' ('from above') and not from the earth ('from below'). That is to say, Barth holds a christology 'from above' since he rejects natural theology. We see Tillich's critiques in particular as legitimate as they stand in their own period of theological setting.

However, these critiques and particularly this scepticism about Barth's theological revision and as such these arguments that Barth still does not allow natural theology, need to be questioned, since we clearly see Barth opening a new

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<sup>23</sup> (Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 140). This thought is also held by Karl Rahner in the discussion of the importance and necessity of the 'transcendental christology' (Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith, an introduction to the idea of Christianity* [London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1978], pp. 206-212; also *Theological Investigation* Vol. 13. 217-219).

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 142.

<sup>25</sup> Tillich, *Dialectic Theology* 142.



vista for 'natural theology' not only for its mere possibility but also for its reality. We simply ask what would have been their responses had they really understood the paradigm shift of Barth's christology and the centre of theological pivot within the whole framework of the *Church Dogmatics* as well?

Now, the problem of the contentions of these scholars becomes even more crucial when we realise its theological as well as its christological implication, because these contentions suggest to us the fact that we cannot know God in or through the humanity of Jesus Christ. Further, we ask whether or not the implication of these contentions leads us to understand Barth as having a 'functional christology'. Namely, Barth 'functionalised' the humanity of Christ for his dogmatic purpose in which the humanity is more or less dissolved into the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, how would these contentions sustain this implication of functionalisation when we see Barth's christology in the doctrine of the *Trinity* which is the hermeneutical ground for a proper understanding of his christology? To be more specific, these contentions will have to face Barth's criticism of the tendency of the traditional christology: 'it [the older dogmatics] was more interested in the former [the Godhead of Jesus Christ] than the latter [the manhood of Jesus Christ]' (*CD* IV/2, 156), if these arguments are to be sustained. For what Barth implies by this statement is that the humanity of Christ (human being, 'from below') should by no means be pushed away at the expense of the divinity of Christ (God, 'from above').

### **3. Christology 'from above' in view of the Dominance of the Divinity of Christ over the Humanity of Christ, viz. Alexandrian Character in the Usage of the Name 'Jesus Christ'**

An impressive and relatively more comprehensive attempt for an understanding of Barth's christology emerges from Charles T. Waldrop. Unlike other theologians, Waldrop takes a linguistic approach, focusing upon the doctrinal

insight of Barth's christology. According to Waldrop, Barth's christological language is theological in principle and not simply philosophical, linguistic or semantic. His conclusion, based on this premise, is that Barth's christology is an 'Alexandrian' christology in its basic character rather than an 'Antiochian' one. The fundamental issue between the two characters is whether Jesus Christ possesses the inherent quality of divinity in which His divinity and humanity is understood as a unity between *two persons* or *two subjects*,<sup>26</sup> or whether His divinity is associated with a role or function rather than with an intrinsic quality so that there is only one person in Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> As a result, while Antiochian christology has been accused of professing two Sons or two Christs, Alexandrian christology has been accused of tending towards the Monophysite doctrine. What Waldrop, by this clarification, implies is that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above'. Being concerned primarily with the *oneness* of the christological subject or *hypostasis*, Alexandrian christology virtually dissolved the humanity of Jesus into the divinity of Jesus. Since the divinity of Jesus is the real Subject of Jesus Christ, the humanity of Jesus is nothing other than a second stage of His divine existence. For Alexandrian thought, the human person or the human nature of Jesus Christ which the Logos assumed in the incarnation is not identified with the individual named 'Jesus'. Jesus Christ is *divine* prior to, and apart from, his existence as a human being. The human being is therefore not a complete individual person in its own right. For Antiochian theology, *two* personal subjects - the divine person God and the human person Jesus - are united in one reality, whilst for the Alexandrian camp,

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<sup>26</sup> Claude Welch holds this understanding (Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* [New York: 1952], pp. 169-183; 222). (=Welch, *In This Name* 169-183; 222)

<sup>27</sup> McIntyre holds this view by differentiating revelation from its 'form' or 'medium.' Revelation is not 'a theophany, the naked appearance of God before us. ... Revelation, any revelation, therefore entails some kind of diminution of God's stature, some form of *kenosis*' (John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* [SCM Press, 1966], p. 154). The reason is that '... if the medium and the subject of revelation are identical and thus known directly, there is no occasion for revelation' (*ibid.*, 169). For a fuller discussion about the revelation model, see *ibid.*, pp. 83-113, and pp. 144-176 in particular.

the name 'Jesus' denotes the one divine person.<sup>28</sup> To prove his judgment on Barth to be accurate, Waldrop refers to the textual evidence from the *Church Dogmatics*. The proof proceeds from the fundamental question of whether Barth's use of the name 'Jesus Christ' denotes the divine person or the human person, or whether sometimes uses the name 'Jesus Christ' to denote the human person and sometimes the divine person.<sup>29</sup>

Waldrop admits that Barth sometimes incorporates the Antiochian character of christology in which the human nature of Jesus is understood as a single person and a distinct human person apart from his divinity or his relation to God.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Waldrop proposes that the overall direction of Barth's christology and its character suggests that the humanity of Jesus is not a fully independent human person but a partial person. The human nature of Jesus is not a complete individual person in its own right. Waldrop states:

The specific human nature of the Lord is not, for Barth, a complete person in itself, although it is, in some sense, personal. It possesses its own will, soul, body, personality, and even its self-consciousness, and it is related to the Logos in obedience and fellowship; yet it is, in the final analysis, *less than a person*.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, Waldrop even goes on to say that '... Barth conceives of the unity of God and man in Christ as a unity between the person God and a specimen of human nature which is not a person.'<sup>32</sup> As such Barth's use of the name 'Jesus' and 'Jesus of Nazareth' does not denote a human subject, even though he uses the terms to connote the divine Logos in His being and action as a human being.<sup>33</sup> In other words, whereas the divinity of Jesus Christ is the determinative subject of Barth's christology His humanity has an 'assistant function', so to speak. So what Barth promotes is not a notion of 'participatory' divinity, but one of an 'intrinsic'

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<sup>28</sup> (Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology its basic alexandrian character* [Berlin: Mouton Publisher, 1984], pp. vii-3). (=Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character*). For a doctrinal definition of the two understandings in the history of Christian doctrine see (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 2nd ed. [New York: Harper, 1958], pp. 317-321).

<sup>29</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 13-15.

<sup>30</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 19-86, esp. pp. 42-45; 52-64; 81-85.

<sup>31</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 3 ea.

<sup>32</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 121.

<sup>33</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 3.

divinity.<sup>34</sup>

Waldrop is inclined to say that Barth underscored the full humanity of Jesus Christ at the expense of his 'Alexandrian character' of christology. He then criticises Barth by turning to nothing less than Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. If Jesus Christ is the second mode of God's being, then He must be none other than God Himself. The doctrine of the Trinity provides the answer to the question of the ontology of christology. As a corollary, Waldrop declares:

Since Barth identifies Jesus Christ with revelation, his insistence that Christian theology must begin with revelation means that it must begin with Jesus Christ. In addition, because Jesus Christ is also of the same divine essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit, to begin with revelation is to begin with the divinity of Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Waldrop is correct in so far as he says that for Barth Jesus Christ is primarily God Himself.<sup>36</sup> Certainly Barth has constantly stressed the oneness of the christological subject, lest we fall into any idea of Christianity having two Gods. It is also true that Barth consistently reminds us of the fact that it is God and not humankind who is the Subject of christology and as such the Subject of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation.

Nonetheless, our questions are what Barth means by the emphasis upon the divine subject? What is the epistemological ground of this revelation? What is the origin of Barth's perception that Jesus Christ is the second mode of God's being? Is the perception of Barth's preconceived idea about the 'Trinity' prior to the particular revelation? Above all, Waldrop's argument again places the issue on the problem of 'functional christology,' since marking Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' in terms of an Alexandrian christology clearly suggests to us the fact that whereas the divinity is the Subject of christology, the humanity as a predicate of the Subject plays an assistant role. The humanity of Christ is not an independent whole person. Moreover, such a subjugatory understanding of the

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<sup>34</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 32.

<sup>35</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 89-90; *CD* I/1, 361, 465, 483; *KD* I/1, 332, 427, 443.

<sup>36</sup> Waldrop, *Barth's Alexandrian Character* 87-164.

humanity of Christ inevitably faces the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*.

For Waldrop, an 'Alexandrian character' in christology means the *dominance of the divinity* of Christ over the humanity of Christ. Macquarrie describes this divine dominance as an 'asymmetrical participation' in the participation of the two natures between the divine and the human in Jesus Christ. Because, Macquarrie quotes: 'his divine essence is that which is originally proper to him, and his human essence is only adopted by him and assumed to it ... the determination of his divine essence is *to* his human, and the determination of his human essence *from* his divine.'<sup>37</sup> This teaching undermines the full humanity of Jesus Christ and pushes us in a 'monophysite direction.'<sup>38</sup> By saying this, Macquarrie insists that Barth's christology is a 'catabatic' christology, a christology 'from above', rather than an 'anabatic' christology, a christology 'from below'.<sup>39</sup> Argued in such a way, Macquarrie understands the phrase 'from above' in terms of the *lack of the full humanity* of Jesus Christ. Differently put, Barth's christology is understood as a 'high' christology in terms of the *dominance* of the divinity over the humanity of Christ or in terms of the *imbalance* between the two natures. But in portraying Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' we will have to deal again with Barth's clear cut statement that the history of Christian dogmatics tended to be more interested in the divinity of Christ rather than the humanity of Christ (CD IV/2, 156).

We wonder whether Waldrop as well as Macquarrie did not rather single out a certain character or clause of Barth's christology, and then expand it in accordance with their theses instead of reading Barth in a *holistic way*, viz. treating his christology through theological content, direction, meaning, and implication *en masse*. In short, these observations need to be examined in the light of Barth's articulation of the '*totus Christus*.'

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<sup>37</sup> (Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 13; CD IV/2, 70). Macquarrie also asks: 'How does Barth know this?' (*ibid.*, 14). Robert Jenson too points out that Jesus Christ is 'a chosen reality' of God (Robert Jenson, *God after God; the God of the Past and the God of the Future, seen in the Work of Karl Barth* [Indianapolis & New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969], p. 69).

<sup>38</sup> Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 14.

<sup>39</sup> Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 13-14.

#### 4. Christology 'from above' in terms of Barth's Preference for Meaning (Interpretation) over Fact

A harsh and intelligent critique of Barth's christology appears in the work of Robert Jenson. It is true that Jenson does not explicitly employ the metaphors 'from above' or 'from below', yet we have to deal with his observation of Barth's christology because the implication of his argument stands directly against our thesis. Jenson proposes that Barth 'simply *reversed* the order'<sup>40</sup> of christology from the nineteenth century's telling of the story of man and then sought the role of Christ in that story to question first the role of Christ. In other words, Barth reversed the christological order from-fact-into-meaning to from-meaning-into-fact. Barth's christology is orientated in its character not from historical fact but primarily in a meaning pursuing christology. Meaning pursuing christology effectively operates on the basis of rational capacity. So unless our rational capacity reaches a certain level for understanding we cannot properly follow meaning pursuing christology.

This implies that 'meaning christology' could be ambiguous as it could be understood in different ways. Hence for some, or perhaps for many, meaning christology would be nothing but a christology which is beyond their comprehension, so to speak. Consequently, meaning christology limits its boundary of reality to a certain intellectual realm rather than fleshing itself out, at least from the point of human understanding. In contrast, 'fact christology' concerns itself chiefly with descriptions of a certain fact. And fact as a simple object exposes itself to all rational humankind in virtue of its concrete visibility and palpability. Surely responsible christology presupposes fact before interpretation and meaning. But, as we noted, in 'meaning christology', understanding or meaning, stands in a different realm from fact, although meaning is derived from fact. The point we are making here is simple. Meaning refers to metaphysical ('high') reality whilst fact refers to physical ('low') reality. For Jenson, this implies that Barth has a 'high' christology to the extent that his christology speaks over people's heads since it explains

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<sup>40</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 69.



something 'from above', and thus his christology does not speak to the world reality.

Jenson intensifies the view that Barth holds a 'from above' christology by stating that, 'A story of man prior to Christ's story does not occur, and never has occurred. There is no human life in itself, ... Rather the event of Jesus Christ's life ... is the eternal presupposition of all else that happens.'<sup>41</sup> This indication proves to be true as Jenson continues to say that

Not one word of what is said in the *Commentary on Romans* is withdrawn. But where abstract eternity was, Jesus of Nazareth now stands. ... the predestining God ... is now Jesus Christ; the decree of predestination is the decision made in his life about us. Indeed, the entire pattern of the dialectic we traced remains quite unaltered in Barth's post-1930 theology.<sup>42</sup>

We ask, why does Jenson not take Barth's paradigm shift from abstract eternity to Jesus of Nazareth seriously? Is Jenson's impression about Barth's early idea of the 'otherness of God' expressed primarily in the *Commentary on Romans* still not too great to see the *reversal of the reversal* made by Barth himself? Does Jenson not oversimplify the constant development of Barth's thought? Jenson actually criticises Barth even more harshly: 'If one went through the *Commentary on Romans* and replaced the tangential intersection of time and eternity with the story narrated by the second article of the Apostle's Creed, he would obtain the theology of the *Church Dogmatics*.'<sup>43</sup>

However, Jenson's is rather harsh description of Barth's christology with far more negative an undertone than many other of Barth's interpreters. For our part, we must come to terms with the question of perspective. Why should we not conceive the insight of the 'otherness of God' from the point of view of the 'tangential intersection of time and eternity', rather than the other way around? Is Jenson's hermeneutical standpoint balanced enough or too biased for a proper interpretation of Barth's christology? So much for the argument. Jenson's interpretation of Barth's use of the copula '*is*' elicits our special attention. Indeed,

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<sup>41</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 69.

<sup>42</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 71.

<sup>43</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 71.

the implication of interpretation topples not only the intention and meaning of Barth's trinitarian hermeneutics but also its content. To come to the point, Jenson's interpretation of Barth's use of the copula 'is' again raises a serious question whether or not Barth functionalised 'Jesus-ology' for the sake of 'Christ-ology'.

Further, Jenson, with help from others,<sup>44</sup> argues that Barth abolished the duality of God and Jesus, Creator and creature, sinner and saint, Jesus and ourselves, and Church and society, which is essential to Christian faith and thought. Jenson insists that the vigour of Barth's christological 'is' does not mean identity.<sup>45</sup> The reason for this is that throughout his dogmatics, Barth by this 'is' means nothing other than an 'analogy,' 'image,' or 'reflection.'<sup>46</sup> Then Jenson presumes that if Barth were to limit the 'is' in any way he would have said: God is 'very like' Jesus. We are Christ's, 'if' we behave such and such. Christ is 'intended' to be the lord of the civil community. With this presumption Jenson again affirms that Barth would thus fall back to his position before the *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>47</sup>

This insistence needs to be countered by the question: how would Jenson respond to Barth's clear teaching that 'Jesus is like us *and* unlike us'? What would Jenson think of the fact that Barth did not say that God is man or man is God, but rather spoke of the divinity of God *and* the humanity of God? Can Barth's emphasis upon *both* sides be easily undermined? Would Jenson expect Barth to say 'simply' that God is man or man is God? Macquarrie, at this juncture, needs to be mentioned since he somewhat anticipates this simple equation. Macquarrie's understanding of Barth's christology as one 'from above' derived from the fact that Barth still talks of the humanity of *God*, and not the humanity of Jesus Christ, or

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<sup>44</sup> Van Buren, Roman Catholics in general, Gustav Wingren, and William Hamilton (Jenson, *God after God* 74, cf. fns. 29-31; 33).

<sup>45</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 74.

<sup>46</sup> Jenson specifically refers to the terms such as 'Christ ... exists analogously to God's way of existing' (CD IV/2, 166: KD 185); Jesus' actions and words 'mirrors and copies' God's actions and words (CD IV/2, 180: KD 200ff); And the terms of 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*), 'correspondence' (*Entsprechung*), 'copy' (*Nachbildung*), or 'resemblance' (*Ähnlichkeit*); English edition translates this as 'similarity' (CD III/2, 219: KD 261).

<sup>47</sup> Jenson, *God after God* 74.

the humanity of man, or any other such term.<sup>48</sup> Should the terms not be understood separately in their own context rather than simply integrating and generalising the specific insight of the terms? Further, if the 'is' has not an ontological but a functional role, does Jenson not then negate the ground of Barth's theology *per se*, the doctrine of the Trinity, which is for him the hermeneutical principle in the *Church Dogmatics*? Then, it is critical to ask whether Jenson has not overlooked Barth's discussion about the *Royal Man* (CD IV/2), because we regard it as the christological bulwark for the christology 'from below'.

### 5. Barth's Christology as both 'from above' and 'from below'

John Thompson, in basic agreement with Bertold Klappert, classifies Barth's christology as a christology both 'from above' and 'from below'. This classification is occasioned by Barth's treatment of christology in the dipolar movements: the Father's going into the far country, incarnation (CD IV/1, § 59), and the Son's returning home, exaltation (CD IV/2, § 64). Barth's christology is not only concerned with God's humiliation, but also with Man's exaltation. Hence, 'His method can more correctly be described as 'from above to below' and *vice versa*.'<sup>49</sup>

Thompson's observation is much fairer to Barth than the other critiques encountered above. Indeed, Barth portrays his christology as being from the two movements: 'from above' and 'from below'. For the purpose of our thesis, however, we further ask what the ground and the locus for the movement are. We understand this ground to be for Barth the *theologia crucifixionis*, not only as the essence of the christology 'from below', but also as one of the two christological underpinnings (with the resurrection) in Barth's whole christology. In addition,

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<sup>48</sup> 'It is important to note, however, that he [Barth] talks of the humanity of God, never of the divinity of man' (Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 284).

<sup>49</sup> (John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective in the Theology of Karl Barth* [London & Edinburgh: 1978], p. 17). For a short discussion see *ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

insofar as we seek a proper evaluation of Barth's christology, our pursuit leads us to go beyond these dual scheme (both 'from above' and 'from below'), because this reality or locus, which is beyond this dual scheme, shows where Barth's christology really leads and what he really means by these dual scheme.

## Summary

Our analysis shows that the quoted scholars, except John Thompson, unanimously label Barth's christology as a christology 'from above'; and yet these judgements were made from various points of view. Some, for example Pannenberg, Rosato, and Macquarrie judge Barth's christology in view of the method of a christological approach. Others, for example Tillich, Macquarrie, and Jenson argue that Barth has a christology 'from above' in view of Barth's rejection of 'natural theology'. As yet another view is taken by, for example Waldrop and Macquarrie, who argue that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above' because in it the divinity of Christ still prevails over his humanity. Consequently, Barth subordinates the humanity of Christ to his divinity. Barth does not allow any possibility of building christology 'from below' as he demarcates radically between the two lines of God and man. Jenson is even harsher by saying that, in fact, Barth has not changed his christology 'from above' in spite of his apparent paradigm shift. Some like Rosato insist that Barth holds a christology 'from above' in terms of his advocating 'Logos christology,' a concept which is a highly ambiguous one in comparison with having a 'life-act christology' of the man Jesus, so to speak. Differently put, Barth promotes a christology 'from above' because, for him, interpreting the meaning precedes the fact rather than allowing the fact to lead to a certain meaning. Additionally, we saw a much more appropriate assessment of Barth's christology, conserving a christology both 'from above' and 'from below'.

Facing such a variety of reasons for marking Barth's christology as a christology 'from above', we will in the following chapters investigate whether the

above judgments are appropriate. Yet, our discussion will go beyond these labelling categories in order further to develop our understanding of the significance of the 'from below' element in Barth's christology. In addition, we see our going beyond these categories as perfectly proper and necessary insofar as we are truly concerned with a fair and responsible account of Barth's christology and not a biased or distorted picture of it.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Christology 'from above' Examined in Barth's Christology**

Having analysed the diverse aspects of Barth's interpreters, this chapter will examine the tenability of labelling Barth's christology as a christology only 'from above' in light of this christology.

#### **I. The Precedence of Epistemology over Methodology**

One of the major reasons indeed the most common one for charging Barth with having a christology 'from above' is occasioned by his taking the pattern of traditional christology, the incarnation of the Logos. Barth's christology proceeds from divine descent to human ascent. In other words, Barth's christology begins with the divinity of christology in which the notion of incarnation stands in its centre. Barth's christology is all about the history of incarnation, the incarnation of the Logos. This charge is held particularly by John Macquarrie, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Philip J. Rosato. The accusation would be reasonable enough if it simply means the apparent method of approach alone, that is, that Barth begins his christology first of all with the divine incarnation 'from above', from the Incarnate Logos, and not from the historical Jesus. In short, one of the issues involved here is associated with the method of Barth's christological approach. Barth's christology is 'from above' because he approaches it first of all with Logos christology, with a pattern of divine incarnation, with divine movement 'from above'.

However, this charge is an oversimplification and therefore it is highly questionable whether it can bear its implication sufficiently. Certainly modern theology, not to mention modern science, heavily depends on a certain methodology to get a right knowledge, or to verify the object of its studies. Thus the same object could be understood differently according to the methodology employed, because, methodology has as one its functions that of interpretation as it is often based upon a certain previous knowledge and therefore it limits the result to a certain extent. Consequently methodology often not only determines our understanding of the



content but also predetermines our understanding or epistemology. As such, methodology plays a very significant role in modern theology as well as in modern science and in the academic world. But methodology, no matter how important, cannot always be taken for granted as the determinative axiom for our knowledge throughout the academic world. This relativity is conspicuous especially in the case of Barth's christology. This implies that we have to question the *direction*, *goal*, and especially *presupposition* of the approaching method, because no methodology stands *sui generis* but for a certain purpose. This suggests, with respect to our thesis, that as far as a proper understanding of Barth's christology is concerned, we have to go beyond the realm of his method of approach by asking what he *means* by the incarnation of Logos. In other words, what is the *reason* for taking this approach and what does he *point to*?

Insofar as christological reason is concerned, Barth begins with the history of divine incarnation *in order to clarify the ontology* of christology.<sup>1</sup> He wishes to clarify *the subject matter* of christology, namely to clarify *who* Jesus Christ is and *who we* are who talk of christology. For the necessity of clarification Barth states:

... God's deity in Jesus Christ consists in the fact that God Himself in Him is the *subject* who speaks and acts with sovereignty. ... *He* is the initiator, founder, preserver, and fulfiller of the covenant. *He* is the sovereign Lord. ... Without the condescension of God there would be no exaltation of man. As the Son of God and not otherwise, Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. This sequence is irreversible. God's independence, omnipotence, and eternity, God's holiness and justice and thus God's deity, in its original and proper form, is the power leading to this effective and visible sequence in the existence of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

For Barth, the fundamental issue of christology is about *who* and *why* Jesus Christ in particular was and is to be our Reconciler or Saviour. So Barth asks that 'If God is not truly and altogether in Christ, what sense can there be in talking about the reconciliation of the world with God in Him?' (CD IV/1, 183). It is worth noting that Barth clearly remarks that the reconciliation of the world took place in the existence of 'this man [Jesus of Nazareth].' Yet our natural question is *who* is this

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<sup>1</sup> Theologically this ontology reflects upon the framework of the doctrine of the Trinity. Christologically this ontology is mirrored in terms of the Initiator or Reconciler.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 48.

man then? According to Barth, this question is a matter of theological assumption as he states that 'we must still know what we are presuming to say in this statement [that the reconciliation took place in this man Jesus of Nazareth]' (CD IV/1, 183). In the preliminary of section 2 on *The Judge Judged in Our Place* (CD IV/1) which is an intensive discussion of the crucifixion, Barth acknowledges that *The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country* is the revelation of His deity, i.e., the christological movement 'from above to below'. However, this is very unlikely to advocate his christology as a 'from above' or 'high' christology. For the movement 'from above' is not an end in itself but aims at the movement 'from below'. So Barth clearly notes that 'But now we enter a whole sphere of new considerations. For *this way has an end, a scope, a meaning*. It does not contradict His deity, ... It conforms supremely to it' (CD IV/1, 211 ea). That is to say, 'We [Barth] had to know who the *servant* is who is here actively at work as subject. We [Barth] had to know that He is the Lord, the Lord of all lords, the one true God' (CD IV/1, 211 ea) although Barth is concerned with the christology 'from below' no less than that of the christology 'from above'.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, 'in ascribing to this man in His unity with God a divine being and nature, it is not speaking only or even primarily of Him but of God' (CD IV/1, 183). As such the incarnation story concerns the *origin* of the event of reconciliation. In other words, the primary aim of the approach 'from above' is *to ask and to ensure how* the event of reconciliation took place.

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<sup>3</sup> This adduces one of our definitions of christology 'from below'. We mean that Barth's christology is one 'from below' by the fact that, for him, the event of the crucifixion is the core of the doctrine of reconciliation; christology. Secondly, this event of crucifixion is worked out, not in the heavenly sphere or the realm somewhere 'from above', but in the reality of humankind, on earth. This point of view will be more intensively dealt with in chapter four.

### 1. *Theo*-logical Decision

Certainly, in his preliminary discussion of the doctrine of reconciliation Barth notes that the divine promise, the atonement made in Jesus Christ, has come down 'from above, from God into the world' (CD IV/1, 119). This standpoint derives from his christological axiom that we cannot responsibly speak about christology unless God reveals Himself to us 'from above'. This necessarily resulted in Barth launching his christology not on the historical man Jesus of Nazareth, but on the incarnation of the Logos. So ostensibly the christology 'from above' predominates in Barth's christology, as many argue. However, it could be said that mentioning these issues prior to all others in christology is for Barth a *theo*-logical decision. For him, the reconciliation presupposes the being and act of God.<sup>4</sup> This presupposition proposes that humankind cannot save itself from its predicament and thus is in need of a Saviour from outwith itself. This proposition is clearly shown in Barth's exposition in the *Very God and Very Man*. The section focuses on 'The Word became flesh' (CD I/2, 132-171). The overall emphasis in the interpretation is that the Word truly *became flesh*. But what Barth first of all does is clarify *who* the Subject is in the flesh. According to him, the Word is the 'Subject' in the flesh. This implies that the incarnation cannot be regarded as one of its 'evolutionary possibilities,' because 'man and man's history are stamped and hallmarked by the Fall' (CD I/2, 134). For this reason, God condescended Himself 'from outside, from above' (CD IV/1, 158) to save humankind from its predicament. Humankind is saved. But since its salvation occurred by 'God' Barth ruminates upon the meaning of 'true God' in regard to the condescension before dealing with other issues, and theological or christological phenomena.

According to Barth, God becoming a human being is simply an incredible event, because it is impossible for a true and holy God to become a sinful human

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<sup>4</sup> 'It is also true of the fruit of it [atonement] brought forth by the Holy Spirit, and the existence of the Christian community and the human decision of faith. But because we are dealing with the true Lord God, because it is a matter of the *atonement* which was made and is made in *His* action and work' (CD IV/1, 159 ea).

being. Yet accepting the witness of Scripture, it is the *Novum mysterium* (CD I/2, 172-202), the 'impossible possibility.'<sup>5</sup> In other words, if the divine incarnation is truly the 'impossible possibility' then this paradoxically exhibits the *theo-logical criterion* for distinguishing the true God from false gods. In sorting out the theological criterion, theological canon, Barth notes that '... what distinguishes the man Jesus as the Son of God is that which apparently stands in the greatest possible contradiction to the being of God: the fact that in relation to God ... *this man* will only to be obedient.'<sup>6</sup> The divine incarnation demonstrates the fact that only true God can become flesh like us by making possible that which is truly impossible. Thus Barth lays a theological corner-stone by saying that 'The true God-if the man Jesus is the true God-is obedient. We have to keep before us the difficulty of this question if we are to be clear what we have to understand and to accept or reject as the content of the New Testament witness to Christ.'<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is not the being of the man Jesus himself who has come down 'from above', but the Son of God 'as the suffering servant of God' (CD IV/1, 164). This being the case, exploring the story of divine humiliation, the movement 'from above', was necessary before exploring the story of human exaltation, the movement 'from below'. Barth says:

... God shows Himself to be the great and *true* God in the fact that He can and will let His grace bear this cost, that He is capable and willing and ready for this condescension, this act of extravagance, this far journey. What marks out God above all false gods is that they are not capable and ready for this. In their

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<sup>5</sup> (CD II/1, 532). We paraphrase the term in a positive sense. The term first appears to describe the problem of the existence of evil. The evil (like shadow), exists and exposes its identity, only as the light of the crucifixion shines, *i.e.*, the root of evil is annihilated at the crucifixion. So although evil still 'exists' and 'works' in our reality it exists and works only as 'unreal real,' 'untrue true,' and 'impossible possibility' (CD III/3, 289-368). However the limit of Barth's view of evil is that it does not reach the problem of what we call today 'natural evil'. In other words, Barth did not deal with the problem of natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, from the perspective of natural evil, which obviously has nothing to do with human will or human power or relationships.

<sup>6</sup> (CD IV/1, 164 ea). It is illuminating, with regard to our insistence that Barth 'envisioned' the christology 'from below' even though he was still talking of the christology 'from above', that Barth is concerned with the man Jesus 'from below' while he is talking of the divine incarnation 'from above', *The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country* (CD IV/1, 164-165).

<sup>7</sup> 'Der wahre Gott - wenn denn der Mensch Jesus wahrer Gott ist - ein Gehorsamer! Man muss sich schon die Härte dieser Gleichung vor Augen halten, um sich klar zu machen, was man als Inhalt des neutestamentlichen Christuszeugnisses zu verstehen, anzunehmen oder eben abzulehnen hat' (CD IV/1, 164; KD IV/1, 179).

otherworldliness and supernaturalness and otherness, etc., the gods are a reflection of the human pride which will not unbend, which will not stoop to that which is beneath it. God is not proud. In His high majesty He is humble. It is in this high humility that He speaks and acts as the God who reconciles the world to Himself. *It is under this aspect first* that we must consider the history of the atonement. That is why the title of this chapter [Vol. IV/1, section 59, chapter XIV] is 'Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant.' At every point we shall be dealing with the action and work of the Lord God. ... It is also true of the fruit of it [atonement] brought forth by the Holy Spirit, and the existence of the Christian community and the human decision of faith. But because we are dealing with the *true Lord God*, because it is a matter of the atonement which was made and is made in *His* action and work, we have to do with Him in that form of a servant which as the true Lord He was capable and willing and ready to assume in order to exist in it, and in which He is *true Lord God* and as such the *true Reconciler* of man with God (CD IV/1, 159 ea).

Certainly, *The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country* is the demonstration of the movement of His divine Sonship 'from above to below'. Yet 'we *had to* begin with this side-the doctrine of the 'person of Christ' - because it is the presupposition of everything that follows ... in our attempt to understand the whole reconciliation of the world with God' (CD IV/1, 211 ea). In short, this 'particular' history of divine self-obedience is the 'indispensable basis and substance of all that follows' in christology. 'It [the divine humiliation] is a matter of the whole Christ and the whole atonement from this one standpoint.'<sup>8</sup>

In defining the being of Jesus Christ as the unity of the being of the living God and living man Barth stresses that, 'It is a being, but a being in a history' (CD IV/1, 126). This is why Barth warns us not simply to dismiss his early *Theologie der Offenbarung* as if it is useless because the early theology 'constitutes the presupposition of that which must be further considered today.' So Barth states: 'He ... who still may not be impressed with the fact that God is God, would certainly

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<sup>8</sup> (CD IV/1, 159). Ebeling rightly points out that the intention of traditional Logos-flesh christology, christology 'from above', is not in the least an intention to describe an epistemological direction, but rather to reflect the direction of the event itself-from God to mankind. The real meaning of christology 'from above' is the movement from God to humankind, in which God alone is the giver, and humanity the recipient. In this regard, all christology must be 'from above' (Gerhard Ebeling, *Lectures on Christology*, University of Tübingen, Summer Semester 1967, pp. 177-182; quoted by Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], p. 68). Similar views are found in Donald M Baillie and P.R. Baelz (Donald M Baillie, *God Was in Christ* [London: 1955], p. 20; P.R. Baelz 'A deliberate mistake?' S.W. Sykes & J.P. Clayton (eds.) in: *Christ, Faith and History* [Cambridge, 1972], p. 33).





not see what is now to be said in addition as the true word concerning His humanity.<sup>9</sup>

The christological necessity of dealing with the incarnation story ('from above to below') in the first place, in spite of the fact that Barth's christology

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<sup>9</sup> (Barth, *Humanity of God* 42). '... You [God] are not that through another but through Your [God's] very self' (Anselm, *Proslogion* ch. XII, p. 133). Bonaventure, in applying Anselm's view of this ontological proof of the existence of God, further to Anselm's assertion that God is the being who [alone] exists in a strict and absolute sense (*Proslogion*, ch. XXII, p. 145), comments that 'If God is God, God exists. And since the antecedent is evident, the conclusion is evident likewise.'

Yet, Brecher argues that Bonaventure's paraphrase of Anselm's thought in terms of 'God is God' is highly ambiguous. Assuming that Bonaventure's 'God is God' is an accurate interpretation of Anselm's view that God is maximally real, then 'God' is functioning in both instances as a proper name. But since proper names are not definitions but only descriptions, Anselm's view that 'God is God,' re-presented by Bonaventure, is not a definition of God, but a description of God. Therefore, Bonaventure's 'God is God' would be that 'God [=proper name] is God [descriptive predicable]; therefore he exists.' So Brecher puts forward the former word as 'God' and the latter as 'god' in his thesis (Robert Brecher, *Anselm's Argument. The logic of divine existence*, Avebury Series in Philosophy, [Gower Publishing Company, Blackmore Press, 1985], p. 108).

The significance of Brecher's exposition lies in its implication that such an expression as 'God is God' cannot mute our recurring questions about 'who,' 'why,' and 'how' the existence and the act of God is. For Barth, this phrase 'God is God,' undoubtedly received from Anselm's thought and Bonaventure's re-presentation in such a formulation, is the last resort in answering the questions about 'how,' 'why,' and 'what' in connection with the *act* and *existence* of God. This wording implies that, strictly speaking, human beings cannot know or question His act and existence, because God is different from human beings. Nevertheless, if the second word 'God' is an 'adjective' so that it describes who and what God is (Being), Barth's emphasis that 'God is God' *cannot* keep human beings silent regarding the existence and act of God because the 'God' (noun) could be understood in many different ways depending on what natures or characters we attribute to the adjective 'God', and thus to the noun 'God'. Hence, such an implication simply uncovers the insufficiency of the phrase 'God is God' in describing the 'how,' 'why,' and 'what/who' God is in the existence and act of God, the phrase with which Barth wished to satisfy the questions raised above.

This *insufficiency* is what Brecher means when he concludes his thesis by saying that, in Anselm's view the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition *cannot* have the attributes of eternity and self-sufficiency. Anselm contended that 'a necessary being must be eternal and self-sufficient'. But, Brecher asks whether it is conceivable that God should be such an entity, and whether it is logically possible that an eternal and self-sufficient being should act in the world. Additionally, Anselm's question of the existence of God contains two questions: is, to ask if God exists, the same as to ask if it is possible to talk coherently of God's existence, and *vice versa*. However, it is not possible to say that 'God exists' is necessarily true. Therefore the God of Christianity could not possibly exist unless a satisfactory account of God-talk is available, and according to Brecher, this has not been available. This unavailability means that Anselm's ontological argument raises the question of availability rather than answering the set question. This 'questioning' is what Brecher implies by insufficiency (*ibid.*, pp. 114-116). Incidentally, Brecher proceeds his thesis with the view that Anselm's *Proslogion* in the context of Platonic metaphysics (*ibid.*, pp. 3-4), while Barth perceives *Proslogion* as an entirely theological discussion, an exposition of faith (Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* [London: SCM Press, 1960], p. 165).



anchors at and envisions the man Jesus of Nazareth ('from below to above'), is well expressed in his understanding of the method of treating the doctrine of reconciliation. According to Barth, whereas the humiliation of Jesus Christ is the work of reconciliation in its 'first form,' the exaltation of Jesus Christ is its 'second form' (CD IV/1, 134-135). This 'first' or 'second' is not simply to mean that his christology is one 'from above' as such. For the two movements are not of the two *status* of Jesus Christ which succeed one another, but of two 'sides' or 'directions' or 'forms.' This is the 'twofold action' and as such the 'actuality' of His work (CD IV/1, 133). Similarly, to refer to the divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ is not to ascribe to Him two different persons or natures, but the free act of the *one* God-man. The two are to be explicated in 'mutual relationship' (CD IV/1, 134). The reason is this.

The New Testament obviously speaks of Jesus Christ in both these ways: the one looking and moving, as it were, from above downwards, the other from below upwards. *It would be idle to try to conclude which of the two is the more original, authentic and important.* Both are necessary. Neither can stand or be understood without the other. A Christ who did not come in the flesh, who was not identical with the Jesus of Nazareth who suffered and died under Pontius Pilate, would not be the Christ Jesus-and a Jesus who was not the eternal Word of God, and who as man was not raised again from the dead would not be the Jesus Christ-of the New Testament.<sup>10</sup>

*The two natures and the two movements of Jesus Christ should be understood in terms of the **totus Christus**, because it is 'His' being and 'His' work.*<sup>11</sup> This raises a practical question as to who and which one should be the first

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<sup>10</sup> (CD IV/1, 135 ea). The movement of 'from above to below' and 'from below to above' are 'two elements of the one grace' (CD IV/1, 136). 'For that reason its [New Testament] statements concerning Him always move in either the one direction or the other, from above downwards or from below upwards' (*Ibid*); '*Eben darum laufen seine Aussagen über ihn immer wieder entweder in die eine oder in die andere Richtung: von oben nach unten oder von unten nach oben*' (KD IV/1, 149). These statements clearly mute the voices of those who charge Barth as having a christology 'from above'. Further, it is crucial, for the purpose of our thesis, to take special attention of the second half of the quotation. What Barth means by the God 'from above' is nothing more than the God 'from below', the *fleshed*, the man Jesus of Nazareth. We will elaborate this point later in our discussion.

<sup>11</sup> (CD IV/1, 134). Similarly, Pittenger urges us to see the 'location' of the incarnation in terms of 'totality' rather than singling it out discretely. For the incarnation 'from above' took place within a certain historical context ('from below') of the ongoing God-human being relationship (Norman Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered*, [SCM Press, 1970], pp. 66-87).

consideration of christology and why? The special-ness of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is that in Him 'God Himself humiliated Himself ... in a supreme loyalty to His divine being' which is the 'secret' of the Christmas and Easter stories (CD IV/1, 134). The 'special' and 'new' thing about the exaltation of Jesus Christ is that He is free, sinless, overcame suffering, He is alive, and is Lord despite the fact that He was bound like us, tempted, suffered, died, and was a servant. Indeed, this special and new thing is *known* through and in the life-act of the *man* Jesus of Nazareth. Yet what Barth sees is that this special and new thing is not initiated by human power but by the *divine* power which is revealed in the event of the resurrection and ascension. To wit, the man Jesus of Nazareth is exalted in the power of His deity. This divine power is what makes Him the Mediator between God and humankind. So Barth clarifies the issue that 'If in Christ ... God is not unchanged and wholly God, then everything that we may say about the reconciliation of the world made by God in this humiliated One is left hanging in the air' (CD IV/1, 183) *in the midst of his emphasis on Christ being the true flesh*. For this reason Barth *had to* clarify the subject matter, the ontology of christology, of the doctrine of reconciliation by focusing upon the story of divine incarnation first, prior to the discussion of the exaltation of the man Jesus of Nazareth. We therefore notice that, 'The doctrine of reconciliation in its first two forms will then necessarily begin with a discussion of the God who humbles Himself in Jesus Christ and of the man who in Jesus Christ is exalted' (CD IV/1, 135).

Our appreciation of Barth's theological hermeneutics will support our contention too. For Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity is the 'hermeneutical principle'<sup>12</sup> particularly of the doctrine of God and of the doctrine of Christ. The

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<sup>12</sup> (CD I/1, 359). In parenthesis, Jüngel sees Barth's doctrine of the Trinity and Rudolf Bultmann's demythologisation as having the same hermeneutical function in safeguarding the divinity and the humanity of Christ: '... the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's theology (1932) has the same function as the programme of demythologizing in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. ... If we understand Bultmann's programme as the concern for appropriate speech about God (and therewith about man) and if we view the fulfilment of this concern as a concern not to objectify God or let him be objectified as an It or He, but to bring him to speech as Thou ... we shall not fail to recognize a conspicuous parallelism to the significance which Barth attributes (and gives) to the doctrine of the Trinity. For the significance - not the final, but certainly a primary significance - of

triune being is the ontology of christology. This means considering the divinity, 'from above', before the humanity, 'from below', is a corollary of two perspectives. Theologically speaking, it is *God* who became flesh, so that Jesus Christ is the *temporal* and *spatial realisation* of God Himself.<sup>13</sup> Soteriologically speaking, Barth *had to* begin his christology with its divinity in order to be consistent with his previous argument that all human beings are sinners and therefore only God can reconcile them to Himself.

The motif of the clarification presupposes the fact that Barth's knowledge of divine revelation came from the particular man Jesus of Nazareth: 'Beyond doubt God's *deity* is the first and fundamental fact that strikes us *when we look at the existence of Jesus Christ*.'<sup>14</sup> We must remember at this point that this christological assumption is not a later development but was already stressed in the *Church Dogmatics* (IV/1) which is written before *The Humanity of God*:

As we look at Jesus Christ we cannot avoid the astounding conclusion of a divine obedience. Therefore we have to draw the no less astounding deduction that in equal Godhead the one God is, in fact, the One and also Another, that He is indeed a First and a Second, One who rules and commands in majesty and the One who obeys in humility (CD IV/1, 202).

'As a man, of this human essence, He can be known even by those who do not know Him as the Son of God' (CD IV/2, 91). Further Barth, in reaffirming Martin Luther's view of the crucifixion that what took place in Jesus Christ is the clash between '*summum, maximum et solum peccatum* and *summa, maxima et sola iustitia*,' points out that the truth of this can be verified 'when we have only to look

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the doctrine of the Trinity for Barth consists in ensuring over against subordinationism on the one hand and modalism on the other, that God becomes "neither an It or a He": "he remains Thou" (Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming* 22). For Gunton's own translation of Jüngel's view see (Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being* [1980<sup>2</sup>], p. 151).

Similarly, Jeanrond observes that although both Barth and Bultmann used different hermeneutical methods, Barth's *extra nos* and Bultmann's *intra nos*, their aim was the same as both wanted to protect the biblical texts from *eisegesis* (Werner G. Jeanrond, 'Karl Barth's Hermeneutics' in: *Reckoning with Barth* [1988], ed. Nigel Biggar, 80-97).

<sup>13</sup> God 'becomes a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., in the form of something he is not' (CD I/1, 316). So the divinity of Jesus is *basic* and not derivative (CD I/1, 402-447).

<sup>14</sup> (Barth, *Humanity of God* 48). Second emphasis added.

at the Gospel passion-narrative and especially the role of Jesus in it.<sup>15</sup> Upon this assumption, Barth now proceeds to theologise about the christological knowledge obtained through the life-act of the *königliche Mensch* (*Royal Man*)<sup>16</sup> in terms of the movement of divine humiliation and the human exaltation. To be more specific, Barth christologises his knowledge of divine revelation with the help of the biblical concept of Logos. In a wider spectrum this theologisation is reflected in the doctrine of the Trinity, and in a narrower scope this theologisation is realised in the discussion about the divinity of Jesus Christ in the first volume of his christology (CD IV/1).

## 2. Envisioning the 'from below' in the 'from above'

Our insistence that epistemology precedes methodology is basically (without simplifying its implication!) to express that the content critique of Barth's christology leads us to the fact that he was *envisioning* the movement 'from below to above' while he was approaching the matter from the aspect of the 'from above to below'. The aim of the approach 'from above' is the humanity of Christ, that is, the christological movement 'from below to above' which is mainly dealt with in the second volume of christology (CD IV/2). Considering Barth's christology from *this aspect of envisionment*, it would be proper to say that, for Barth, the christology 'from below' could be rather the centre of his christology in spite of our full awareness of the unyielding and such an overriding element of the christology 'from above' in it. This is one of the points of what we mean by a re-discovery of the significance of 'from below' in Barth's christology. This

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<sup>15</sup> (CD IV/1, 238). Barth's reference to the Gospel stories as the verification of this knowledge indicates what is the true leaning ground and therefore the last resort of his whole christology. We will spell out the significance of this indication in chapter five.

<sup>16</sup> This term appears in the second christology volume (CD IV/2, 154-264; KD 173-293) of his trilogy. However it is perfectly legitimate to employ the term at this stage of our discussion since Barth means by the 'Son of Man' this '*Royal Man*'. The christological significance, and its insight, will be intensely dealt with in chapter five.

envisionment is adduced in his entitlement of chapter 14 of the *Church Dogmatics* (IV/1) in which he does not entitle the chapter abstractly, for example as 'God, The Servant as Lord' or 'Logos, The Lord as Servant' etc., but specifically *Jesus Christ, The Lord as Servant*. This envisionment becomes clear as we read Barth's understanding of the deity of Christ:

The meaning of His deity-the only true deity in the New Testament sense-*cannot be gathered from any notion of supreme, absolute, non-worldly being*. It can be learned *only from what took place in Christ*. Otherwise its mystery would be an arbitrary mystery of our own imagining, a false mystery. It would not be the mystery given by the Word and revelation of God in its biblical attestation, the mystery which is alone relevant in Church dogmatics. Who the one true God is, and what He is, i.e., what is His being as God, and therefore His deity, *His 'divine nature,' which is also the divine nature of Jesus Christ if He is very God-all this we have to discover from the fact that as such He is very man and a partaker of human nature, from His becoming man, from His incarnation and from what He has done and suffered in the flesh*. For-to put it more pointedly, the mirror in which it can be known (and is known) that He is God, and of the divine nature, is His becoming flesh and His existence in the flesh (CD IV/1, 177 ea).

Thus Barth declares that 'In their [false gods'] otherworldliness and supernaturalness and otherness, *etc.*, the gods are a reflection of the human pride' (CD IV/1, 159). What is the significance of this statement?

*Firstly*, we must come to terms with the fact that Barth articulates the cruciality of the humanity in christology while the main focus of his discussion is upon the divine movement 'from above'. The whole content of the argument of the 'from above' is based upon the humanity of Christ and not the deity *per se*. *Secondly*, to appreciate the significance of 'from below', we should not bypass the time-span involved in the writing the *Church Dogmatics*. Barth wrote the first volume of christology in 1953, the second in 1955, and the third in 1959. Then in between the second and the third volume of christology he announces *The Humanity of God* in 1956. The first volume deals with the story of incarnation, the second discusses the story of exaltation, and the third portrays the prophetic insight of the two events of christology. What interests us here is that Barth *already* speaks of the *non-otherness* or *non-supernaturalness* of God which points to 'low' christology in the first volume of 1953, while he is still talking about the incarnational story 'from above'. We recall that this insight of the *togetherness* of



God is clearly expressed about three years *later* in *The Humanity of God* in which he officially admits the christological paradigm shift from the divinity to the humanity. This envisionment indicates that the movement 'from above', the 'high' christology, does not point to itself but to the movement 'from below' to above, the 'low' christology. Reconciliation consists in the *humiliation* of the Son of God and the *exaltation* of the Son of Man. This means that reconciliation is the *exchange* of God's righteousness for human unrighteousness initiated by Him (CD IV/1, 75-78). But '*The first is obviously the means or the way to the second*' (CD IV/1, 75 ea). Here again, concerning our thesis, it is significant to note that this statement, which signals the gravity of the 'from below' in connection with the 'from above', appears while he was discussing about the significance of the 'from above' in his christology. Indeed, Barth's whole christological argument, seen from the perspective of our thesis in particular, is *pointing to* a specific content, that is, the movement 'from below to above'. This is what Barth denotes when he lays out the corner-stone of his christological statement; that he *deliberately* referred to the name Jesus Christ at the *climax* of the discussion about the meaning of *Immanuel*, and not at the outset, in order to demonstrate that 'Everything moves *towards*' (CD IV/1, 21) Jesus Christ. Our insistence that Barth envisioned the 'from below' while he was still discussing the 'from above' is well vindicated as we hear his statement that 'We could not *even* draw our first line, that which runs from above to below, without touching this question [from below to above], and even being deeply involved in it, in our final discussion of the Church and faith' (CD IV/2, 9 ea).

Methodologically, one may locate a certain view of christology at the beginning or at the end of discussion, or one may approach christology with a certain aspect of it. But if we seek the meaning or purpose of the disposition or method of approach, especially in the case of Barth's christology, the significance of the methodology dwindles considerably. Differently put, the precedence of epistemology over methodology points to the fact that that to which Barth's christology points is not the methodology *per se* which represents a christology 'from above down', but is the *humanity* of Christ, the christology 'from below up'.



Hence the judgement based purely on the approaching methodology alone would lose its veracity. Methodology itself cannot and should not be the criterion or the last word for our judgment, because in the case of Barth's christology '*the former [from above to below] aims at the latter [from below to above]*' and the latter is grounded in the former.<sup>17</sup> Methodology cannot simply postulate the author's intention and aim. Rather, in the case of Barth, christological methodology serves and confirms christological epistemology by reflecting upon *the already known fact*, i.e., the life-act of the *earthly* Jesus. The christological interest of Barth is not of the methodology of this christology *per se*, of how the christology to be approached, but of the christological *agenda* or hidden intention. Barth acknowledges well of the fact that methodology is a relative<sup>18</sup> tool which is employed to achieve a particular goal. For him, systematisation is one of the dangers in formulating christology or in dogmatics as a whole. What determines christology or dogmatics is not its method, but its object or content. Any systematic clarity or certainty must be subject to its object. If christology is dependent on

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<sup>17</sup> 'daß jene auf diese zielt, diese durch jene begründet ist' (CD IV/1, 122 ea.; KD IV/1, 134).

<sup>18</sup> The following acknowledgments also implicitly express that the method of approach cannot be the absolute indicator in judging the content: 'there is no theology without risk' (CD IV/2, 10); theology is a *theologia viatorum* (CD III/4, 34, 46); 'the choice of the dogmatic method cannot in any circumstances be made with the intention of procuring for the dogmatician an assured platform from which he can survey and control it' (CD I/2, 867), because the '[christological] centre is not something under our control, but something which exercises control over us' (CD I/2, 866).

Sykes presumes that Barth's fear of any systematised christology has to do with his early critique of Schleiermacher's method in terms of the Romantic 'principle of the centre,' the principle in which Schleiermacher attempted to reconcile the two opposites, regarding them as *the* virtue of theology (S.W. Sykes (ed), 'Barth on the Centre of Theology' in: *Karl Barth. Studies of his Theological Method* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], p. 51; for an overall survey and criticism on Barth's theological method see pp. 1-54).

With regard to the relativity of methodology, Wingren adequately points out that 'talk about *the* theological method obscures the situation. ... When the theological procedure is conceived of correctly and realistically, it becomes entirely relative, adapted to a specific situation when certain problems are the object of discussion ...' (Gustaf Wingren, *Theology in Conflict* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959], p. 80). David H. Kelsey's work on *The Use of Scripture in Recent Theology* is developed in agreement with this view of G. Wingren. This view is that Kelsey deals with the problem of theological methodology, not by doing 'theological methodology' as such, but by referring to some theologians' methods, since there is not, and cannot, be the normative methodology in theological science (David H. Kelsey, *The Use of Scripture in Recent Theology* [London: SCM Press, 1975]). (=Kelsey, *Use of Scripture*)

systematisation, the freedom of the Word to decide its own priorities would be lost. Of course theologians need to choose a certain system or method to express their views. But method should not be regarded as that which validates the object. For '... we cannot know Jesus Christ without realising from the very outset ... the *inadequacy* of all analogies to His own becoming and being' (CD IV/2, 58 ea); 'The particular danger of dogmatics is to think schematically' (CD IV/2, 7). Therefore 'openness' is the best possible attitude in 'doing' christology (CD I/1, 853-884).

The fact that epistemology determines methodology becomes implicit in Barth's acknowledgment that the scheme of *Church Dogmatics* should not claim the absolute authority, otherwise it would be building another tower of Babel in theology.<sup>19</sup> As for his christology, methodology points to the epistemology, whereas epistemology reflects and forms the methodology. For Barth, taking the traditional pattern of Logos christology is nothing but a *process of qualification* that Jesus Christ is *the* true Reconciler. To this extent, to say that Barth's christology is *more* a christology 'from below' or 'low' christology than it is a christology 'from above' or 'high' christology could perhaps be a *more appropriate*<sup>20</sup> judgment in the light of what the 'from above' *means* in his theology. Additionally, our appraisal of the meaning of the approaching method that is for many a 'from above' might indicate Barth's implicit protest against the trends of the contemporary Western theological circle at a time when the historical critical method came to dominate Western theology as well as the heritage of theological ways of

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<sup>19</sup> In view of the constantly increasing extent of the *Dogmatics* Barth occasionally asked himself whether he was building Solomon's temple or the tower of Babel. 'I am quite sure that the angels sometimes chuckle at my enterprise; but I would like to think that the chuckle is well meaning' (Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from letters and autobiographical texts* [London: SCM Press, 1976], p. 374; 'I see ... the *Church Dogmatics*, not as a conclusion but as the opening of a new conversation' - about the question of the right course for theology' (= *ibid.*, 488).

<sup>20</sup> It is very important, as far as a proper understanding of our thesis, that this comparative judgment indicates that we do not deny the 'from above' element in Barth's christology. What we mean by this is a rediscovery of our reemphasis on the significance of the 'from below' element in his christology. As such our attempt lies on a reassessment of Barth's christology, and as such whole theology in terms of a fairer evaluation.

thinking (and this still seems to be the case in many ways). We are fairly convinced, with respect to the question of methodology *versus* epistemology particularly in the case of Barth's christology, that theological *presupposition* and *interest* determines methodology more often than the other way around.

## II. The Meaning of Immanuel

We argued that judging Barth as having a christology 'from above' on account of his incarnational approach is too weak to sustain its implication and consequence. And for Barth, incarnation means *Immanuel*, 'God with us,' and *vice versa*. *Immanuel* is the correspondent expression of the act of incarnation. In other words, it is the conceptual exposition of the divine act of incarnation. In this way it frames and sums up the overall content, direction, and meaning of incarnation. Moreover the term is a good instruction of the true incentive of christology on the whole. Hence it is inevitable for us to scrutinise what Barth means by *Immanuel*.

### 1. *Immanuel*: the Clarification of the Subject Matter of Christology and the Description of Humankind being the Centre of Christology

#### 1) The Primacy of the *Immanuel*

According to Barth, the divine incarnation 'from above' is the 'free act of the faithfulness of God.' This act of God is the 'subject-matter, origin, and content' of the message received and proclaimed by the Christian community (CD IV/1, 3). This free and faithful act of God refers to *Immanuel*.<sup>21</sup> Christian theology deals with various issues. But the message of *Immanuel* as fulfilled in the atonement is the 'heart,' 'centre,' and 'core'<sup>22</sup> of Christian theology, because it deals with the

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<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10.

<sup>22</sup> (CD IV/1, 3-4). The atonement is the 'centre' and 'proper' subject of the Christian message, and other events are 'purely contingent,' having only a relative significance. For the former concerns all humankind, whilst the latter concerns individual humans (CD IV/1, 46).

eternal life of humankind. This implies the fact that God out of His pure grace bridged the unbridgeable gulf by Himself becoming a human being like us. For this reason, *Immanuel* is not general grace, creation, preservation, dominion etc., but the 'redemptive grace of God' (CD IV/1, 8-9).

This being the case, the pivot of the statement of *Immanuel* does not depend upon humankind but on God. Humankind is always learning the message of *Immanuel* since it is God who initiates and establishes the act. In such a way, *Immanuel* is 'primarily a statement about God and only then and for that reason a statement about us men.'<sup>23</sup> Truly *Immanuel* forms an 'inner circle' among others of His life and actions. As such it is 'the *telos*' (CD IV/1, 8) of all the acts of God. So even from the standpoint of us human beings it does not refer to the existence of human beings in general but a 'special' will and work of God (CD IV/1, 8). It is in this way and in this sense that the Christian community proclaims 'We with God' when it proclaims 'God with us'.<sup>24</sup>

## 2) The Significance of the Locus and the Gravity of the Humanity of Jesus Christ and as such of All Humankind: the Aim of the Incarnation

However, we should not overlook Barth's emphasis on the other aspect of the meaning of *Immanuel*. If this means that God is *with us*, then it presupposes that human beings 'are' also a part of the event. It tells us that the being and the life-act of God stands in a relationship to *our* own being and life-act. That is to say, 'He does not will to be God without us, that He creates us rather to share with us

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<sup>23</sup> (CD IV/1, 4-5). The atonement in Jesus Christ is 'primarily ... the great act of God's faithfulness to Himself and therefore to us' even though it is the atonement that overcomes human sin (CD IV/1, 47).

<sup>24</sup> (CD IV/1, 15-16). If God is with us, does He really exist? If He does, how? According to Barth, God exists only through His self-revelation: 'God is ... only through Him,' i.e., 'only from Him and to Him' (CD IV/1, 6). This implies two points. First, we cannot prove or postulate the existence of God, because God exists only through His *self-revelation*. Second, His being 'with us' is the power and truth of His incomparable being, which is proper to Him alone because His act of *Immanuel* is totally *His freedom* and His *freedom*: 'God cannot be forced to give us a part in His divine being' (CD IV/1, 9).

and therefore with our being and life and act His own incomparable being and life and act, that He does not allow His history to be His and ours ours, but causes them to take place as a common history' (CD IV/1, 7).

It is illuminating in connection with our thesis that the particularity of the event of *Immanuel* has to do with the universality of the salvation of *humankind* (CD IV/1, 8). For this reason general (contingent) history (*Historie*) becomes a redemptive history, a history with meaning and dynamism (*Geschichte*). Indeed *Immanuel* means that salvation is intended and ordained for humankind. This ordaining of salvation for humankind is the 'original' and 'basic' will of God, the 'ground' and 'purpose' of His will as Creator.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly it is first of all God who has incarnated Himself to the world and is with us, and we are nobody unless He is with us. But so what? If Barth really means what he says, then this declaration is an obvious clue for our thesis. This declaration of *Immanuel* not only shows us the direction of christology, but also plays the pivotal role for the importance of the humanity in christology since the true humanity of all humankind is based upon that of Jesus Christ. Further if this announcement is the ultimate meaning of *Immanuel*, then this announcement must be the *hermeneutical criterion* for our understanding of the *meaning of the divine incarnation and christology as a whole*. Thus in empowering the significance of this original will and this purpose of God's will, Barth notes that the event of *Immanuel* differs from the 'blind paradox of an arbitrary act of the divine omnipotence of grace' (CD IV/1, 12). It is a determined act of self-obedience to accept the ordination of humankind which it resisted. God defends and vindicates His glory in doing so.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly 'the "God with us" carries, with all seriousness, a "We with God"' (CD IV/1, 14). Pointing to such a significant role for and place for humankind Barth asks if 'God with us' does not include 'We with God',

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<sup>25</sup> (CD IV/1, 9). 'God creates, preserves and over-rules man for this prior end and with this prior purpose' (*ibid*).

<sup>26</sup> 'We cannot fully understand the Christian 'God with us' without the greatest astonishment at the glory of the divine grace and the greatest horror at our own plight' (CD IV/1, 13).



how can it really be understood as a 'God with us' (CD IV/1, 14)? Indeed 'in that one *Man*' (CD IV/1, 14-15 ea) God has made Himself the Giver and gift of our salvation. Through the work of *this man Jesus* our true humanity is established which is the very content of our salvation. In such a way all humankind do also stand in the centre of Barth's christology. To stress humankind as being at the centre<sup>27</sup> Barth declares:

It [the establishment of our true humanity] is not a small thing, but *the greatest of all*. ... And it is this 'We with God' that is meant by the Christian message in its central 'God with us,' when it proclaims that God Himself has taken our place,<sup>28</sup> that He Himself has made peace between Himself and us, that by Himself He has accomplished our salvation, i.e., our participation in His being (CD IV/1, 15 ea).

Barth's understanding of reconciliation is also an illuminating point with regard to the point of humankind as being the centre of the divine incarnation, 'from above'. By definition reconciliation is the 'restitution' of a 'fellowship' which once existed between God and humankind. Reconciliation is the 'realisation' of the 'original purpose' (CD IV/1, 22) which was once defied. According to him, this 'fellowship' which is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ is the content of the covenant: 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.'<sup>29</sup> This covenant is a covenant with the whole community of Israel and not with a particular partner.<sup>30</sup> This character of a community-orientated covenant adduces the universal character of the covenant. According to Barth, the covenant is the presupposition of the reconciliation. This means that the covenant is a single, self-sufficient, independent,

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<sup>27</sup> This means an inclusive sense between God *and* man and not an exclusive sense between God or human being.

<sup>28</sup> The meaning of this will be explored in the late discussion.

<sup>29</sup> Jer 7:23, 11:4, 30:22, 31:33, 32:38; Ezek 36:28 (CD IV/1, 22). The covenant has both *mutual* and *unilateral* aspects: God's free choice for His people, the community's free choice of this God as its God for itself, and an initiative willingness on the part of God with a subordinate obligation on the part of Israel. Yet Barth favours the *free divine initiative* of the covenant and its *gracious* character. He views the act of Yahweh from its formation of 'Israel' in the earliest period to the return of the captives from exile, as the fulfilment of this covenant. This whole picture is the series of positive, critical, and negative deductions of the covenantal content. It is an 'example' and 'commentary' in Barth's whole consideration of the doctrine of atonement, and reconciliation (CD IV/1, 22-26). Further, Barth sees the qualification of the content of the covenant in terms of its 'universal' character, its 'mission' oriented, and its 'forgiveness of sin' (CD IV/1, 26-34).

<sup>30</sup> 2 Sam 7:5-29; Deut 5:2, 29:14 (CD IV/1, 24).



free work of God in itself, which is not identical with the divine work in creation. The achievement of the reconciliation is not the highest evolutionary continuation or the crown and completion of the positing which God has willed and accomplished distinct from Himself.<sup>31</sup> The eternal will of God, the reconciliation, does not follow or derive from all the reality distinct from God, but 'underlies' and 'precedes' it.<sup>32</sup> This is what makes Jesus Christ so new with regard to all that precedes Him in the creaturely world. Jesus Christ cannot be deduced from the world since He himself is the Creator.<sup>33</sup> That the covenant is the presupposition of reconciliation highlights the unalterable *self-determination* of Jesus Christ to be the 'fellow' and 'friend' of *humankind* (CD IV/1, 50). This reflects the fact that the covenant is established first of all with the humanity of Christ *before* the creation. This antecedent character of the covenant suggests it being the *universal* covenant. For the *a priori*-ness, the event before the creation, implies the 'all-inclusiveness'. In other words, if the covenant is set up with the humanity of Christ even prior to the creation of all humankind, then the humanity in christology should be at the centre of christology and not on the periphery. Further, if the antecedent covenant reveals the universal grace in virtue of the humanity of Christ, then all humankind must also be the centre of christological consideration. The 'all humankind' implies the 'unconditional, eternal and divine validity' (CD IV/1, 46) of the atonement. This unconditional validity alone prompts us to commit ourselves to talk about the

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<sup>31</sup> (CD IV/1, 49). Here Barth parts company with Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher deduced and interpreted the being of Jesus Christ from the being of man and the world, instead of the other way round. According to Barth, He derives the atonement from creation, instead of creation from atonement. Schleiermacher understands the final Word as being on the evolutionary process of finite being and development. Barth contends that 'there is no continuation or evolution whatsoever between a new creation and new man (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:24)' and creation and man, or between the first Adam and the last Adam (1 Cor 15:44f.) (CD IV/1, 50).

<sup>32</sup> (CD IV/1, 50). The existence and work of Jesus Christ does not follow from the gracious act of divine providence. 'It is for the sake of Jesus Christ that creation takes place and God rules as the preserver and controller of world-events' (*ibid*). If the atonement is the act of divine freedom, sovereignty, and love, 'The Christian dialectic of covenant, sin and reconciliation cannot therefore be subjugated at any point to the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis' (CD IV/1, 80).

<sup>33</sup> 'He is in it [creation] but He is also quite different from it. He stands over against it [creation] as the One who was from the beginning' (CD IV/1, 50).

atonement. To be logical, if the atonement truly aims at, and *de facto* encircles, *all* humankind unconditionally, then dealing with it within christology is not merely an option but a necessity. In other words, if the atonement does not concern humankind as a necessity and its concern is to be conditional, there cannot be true and really *serious* talking about the atonement and, as such, christology, no matter how great or gracious the event was. But what does Barth say about this? Knowing the articulation and the context of the text, it is true to say that the true value, and therefore the seriousness, of our commitment to speaking of christology derives from the fact that the atonement is not only of God with the humanity of Christ, and as such of all humankind, but also of the humanity of Christ, and as such of all humankind with God. So Barth draws our special attention to this by continuing immediately after the above statement: 'But the atonement is the very special history of God with man, the very special history of man with God. *As such* it has a particular character and demands particular attention. *As such* it underlies and includes, not only in principle and virtually but also actually, the most basic history of every man' (CD IV/1, 157 ea).

Moreover, Barth's understanding of the nature of the subject, the Reconciler, is instructive for our contention too. He does not elaborate his christological description under the title 'christology' so to speak, but under the doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>34</sup> This implies that the subject of christology does not stand for

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<sup>34</sup> Moltmann criticises Barth's christological application of ἀποκαταλλάσσειν. According to Moltmann, the term ἀποκαταλλάσσειν hardly played any central role in the early Christian community. On the contrary, the righteousness of God is the central concept of the New Testament. Moltmann argues that Barth reduced christology to a 'reconciliation christology' and thus depended too heavily upon the concept of 'reconciliation'. In such a way Barth 'functionalised' christology in terms of 'reconciliology' (Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* [London: SCM Press, 1987]).

Apparently the critique of Moltmann is quite correct since Barth justifies his view of the exchange to the term ἀποκαταλλάσσειν. But we need to ask whether Moltmann does not underestimate the intention of Barth to entitle his christology as a doctrine of reconciliation instead of 'christology'. Following his christological train of thought it becomes clearer that Barth is truly concerned with the *relevance* of christology for human beings by this specific entitlement. Differently put, we are speaking of christology because it involves *us* more comprehensively and inclusively than any other theological subjects. Perhaps this is also the reason why Barth's theology overall is more christologically oriented than that of any other theologian. Moreover we must not overlook the fact that Barth does deal with the righteousness of God and the kingly rule of God in his christology, and this is specifically seen in the third volume of his christology (CD IV/3,2).

itself but essentially for the humanity in christology and as such for all humankind. The sovereign action of divine reconciliation and the reconciled humanity are *both* in *this* Jesus Christ. 'As *this One* He is the subject of the act of reconciliation' (CD IV/1, 126 ea). Only for this reason, 'The atonement takes precedence of all other history' (CD IV/1, 157). This is what Barth's definition means; that the reconciliation is the 'exchange' of the humiliation of God and the exaltation of humanity. That is to say that the aim of the reconciliation is for *this* 'exchange' and *nothing else*. Thus to speak in exaggeration which we regard as necessary for the purpose of our thesis, the exchange of humiliation and exaltation means that God humanised Himself in order to 'divinise'<sup>35</sup> humanity: 'As in Him God became like man, so too in Him man has become like God. As in Him God was bound, so too in Him man is made free. As in Him the Lord became a servant, so too in Him the servant has become a Lord' (CD IV/1, 131). Thus, as far as Barth's christology is

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Incidentally, was the employment of the concept 'exchange' not rather a precise *content* of the realisation of the righteousness of God which is, for Barth, the kingly rule of God? Let us assume that the righteousness of God is the central concept of Scripture. But what is that? If we are not mistaken, his christological reference to the 'exchange' is an attempt to explicate the content of the meaning of the actualised righteousness of God in a concrete or relevant manner. We must realise that Barth does develop his christology in terms of the kingly rule of God which is, for him, the righteousness of God in a very concrete manner. Barth intensively develops the reality of the righteousness of God under the title *The Royal Man* in the second volume of his christology (CD IV/2). He then further elaborates on the subject of the righteousness of God in the third volume of his christology (CD IV/3,2) in which its reality is eschatologically but concretely developed in the light of Christian ethics. Therefore Moltmann's criticism that Barth developed a so-called 'reconciliation christology', implying that he 'soteriologised' christology in its functional term is highly debatable, so much so, that we are not convinced at all that Barth 'marginalised' the issue of the righteousness or the kingdom of God by 'centralising' the issue of reconciliation (soteriology) or that he pushed christology even to the level of a soteriological function.

<sup>35</sup> Of course Barth notes that the exaltation of the Son of Man is by no means a divinisation of humanity but a 'fellowship' with the Son of God: 'not divinised man, but man sovereign and set at the side of God, in short man exalted by God' (CD IV/1, 134; IV/2, 71). But, as for Baillie, to approach christology with His humanity would face a problem of identifying the human life of Jesus of Nazareth with the very life of God Himself (D.M. Baillie, *God was in Christ* [Faber, 1948], p. 87). In contrast, Meyendorff insists that the divinisation of human nature does not mean its elimination, but rather it comes to a full humanity. So the christology 'from below up' to the mystery of Christ is 'the point where the post-Chalcedonian Byzantine thought meets the modern christological concerns' (John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* [New York: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1969], p. 165; also *Byzantine Theology* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1983] [=1974], pp. 32-41, esp. 40-41, cf. 149-165). For a more detailed discussion see chapter four, pages 12-15.

concerned, humankind is not placed in a secondary rank, and nor should it be treated as such, but it shares the centre. Precisely speaking, humankind is not that which 'should be' in the centre of Barth's christology, but that which indeed *is* in the centre of it. This is what Barth indicates when he says that 'It is in this recognition that we are committed to a genuine regard for this centre of the Christian message and the Christian faith. Without it we cannot attain to the joy or certainty or freedom to which we are summoned by this event' (CD IV/1, 46).

Barth's understanding of the qualification of the concept of the covenant which is the unconditional forgiveness of our sins<sup>36</sup> also shows where the main concern of his christology lies. The true greatness of the divine covenant lies in the fact that it aims at humanity, *i.e.*, in the forgiveness of human sin and in reconciliation with God. The 'new' and the 'everlasting'<sup>37</sup> covenant, after all, tells us what the covenant truly means. God changed the form of covenant in such a way that He Himself takes the full responsibility for the lack of human correspondence, 'He Himself will turn them to Himself' (CD IV/1, 33). God fulfils and vindicates the covenant so that human beings become totally free and new. What is left to them is the 'freedom of obedience' (CD IV/1, 33) as His covenant partner. Specifically, the new covenant means the *unconditional* remittance of *human* sins (Jer 31:34b). It is in such a way that the new covenant becomes a 'perfect covenant' (CD IV/1, 33) as it is *humankind* who becomes free and new as such. Barth states: '... in this way and on this basis God will break the opposition of His people, creating and giving a new heart to the men of His people, putting His Spirit in their inward parts, making the observance of His commandments self-evident to them ... and in that way completing the circle of the covenant' (CD IV/1, 33). Indeed 'ultimately God has nothing but forgiveness' (CD IV/1, 34). That humankind is the centre of the divine movement 'from above' in terms of its direction and purpose is well expressed when Barth says that 'It is apparent at once

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<sup>36</sup> 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more' (Jer 31:34b).

<sup>37</sup> Jer 31:31f., 32:38f.; Ezek 11:19f.; cf. Deut 30:6 (CD IV/1, 32-33).

that the formula "God everything and man nothing" ... is not merely a 'shocking simplification' but complete nonsense' (CD IV/1, 89). For '... the meaning and purpose of the atonement made in Jesus Christ is that man should not cease to be a subject in relation to God but that he should be maintained as such-that he should be newly created and grounded as such' (CD IV/1, 89). Indeed, 'the forgiveness of sins is the central meaning of the divine action in the passion of Jesus Christ' (CD IV/1, 256). Therefore if the significance of humankind and it being the centre of christology in and through the humanity of Christ is down played, the *Immanuel* based upon the covenant of grace would become meaningless. This is what Barth implies when he relentlessly underlines that the incarnation is the fulfilment of the covenant based upon the free *grace* of God. Here too our thesis is concerned with the aim of the covenant. Thus Barth reminds us of the real issue of the covenant by saying that 'There is no question of a dissolution [between the old and the new covenant] but rather of a revelation of *the real purpose and nature of that first covenant*' (CD IV/1, 32 ea).

Our rediscovery of the significance of the 'from below' element in Barth's christology in view of the *aim* of the incarnation (*Immanuel*) proves to be perfectly proper as we come to terms with Barth's description of the 'from above' movement of christology in light of its 'from below' movement. Barth notes that his second volume of the *Church Dogmatics* (IV/2) which is all about the 'from below' movement of christology, deals with the 'the exaltation of the this servant [Jesus of Nazareth] to be the Lord ...' (CD IV/2, 28 ea). Here we need to give our special attention to the last phrase 'to be the Lord.' Jesus Christ did not become the servant to be the servant. In other words, the goal of His humiliation, 'from above to below' is not the end in itself. The movement 'from above to below' is for the sake of the movement 'from below to above'. Whereas the movement 'from above' is only the beginning point of christological discussion, the movement 'from below' completes the beginning movement. So Barth stresses that 'We cannot stop at an abstract theologia crucis, for this is full already of a secret theologia gloriae. ... When we say "Jesus Christ" we have no option but to look at this movement from



below to above as it takes place in Him, at His exaltation.’<sup>38</sup>

God came into the world ‘from above’ in order to judge the world. And the glory belongs to God as the reconciliation has taken place in Jesus Christ. ‘Yet ... They [biblical witnesses] do not put God abstractly at that heart of the message, but man with God. And it may well be a temptation and even dangerous to overlook this, to know better, to try to oppose to the continually threatening anthropomorphism a no less abstract theomorphism’ (CD IV/2, 10). Christology is all about the fulfilment of the broken covenant based upon a ‘secret of grace’ (CD IV/2, 42) and therefore upon an ‘inconceivable overflowing of the grace of God’ (CD IV/1, 67). This fulfilment is the form and the content of the overflowing grace of God seen as the ‘so perfect act of love’ (Jn 3:16, 2 Cor 5:19, cf. 70-75) (CD IV/1, 72). However, ‘How can even the most perfect decision ... be the origin of the covenant, if it is made in the absence of the one who must be present as the second partner at the institution of the covenant to make it a real covenant, that is, man?’ (CD IV/1, 66). The *telos* of this divine judgement was the redemption of humanity. In other words, the *telos* of the divine incarnation ‘from above’ and judgment was nothing but for the sake of the human exaltation ‘from below’ and redemption in and with the humanity of Christ (CD IV/2, 6). Human being is more than a mere object of the divine work in christology: ‘In his spontaneity as such he is an object, but he is more than that. For as an object of the truly and effectively reconciling grace of God, in his own particular, subordinate and secondary place and manner and function *he is also a subject* of this whole occurrence’ (CD IV/2, 4 ea). ‘There can be no question of a second truth side by side with the first. There is only the one mighty truth of the reconciliation of the world with God as it has taken place in Jesus Christ. ... In the strict sense, we are not even dealing with another part of the one truth. It [the divine action ‘from above’ and the human action ‘from

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<sup>38</sup> (CD IV/2, 29; ‘*Er kann also nicht in einer abstrakten theologia crucis stecken bleiben, denn eben sie ist voll heimlicher theologia gloriae. ... Wer "<<Jesus Christus>> sagt, dem bleibt ja nichts Anderes übrig, als auch auf diese in ihm stattfindende Bewegung von unten nach oben, auf seine Erhöhung ... zu blicken"*’ (KD IV/2, 29-31).



below'] is indivisible' (CD IV/2, 5). To see the 'two elements' in one is to do justice to the truth of christology in all its repletion. So it is a matter of seeing the old in a new way: 'We have not to consider a second thing, but the first one differently' (CD IV/2, 5). For human beings do not stand on the margin, but are there with God 'at the very centre' of christology (CD IV/2, 5 ea). '... the specific danger of modern Evangelical dogmatics ... is that it will overlook or fail to take seriously the side of the biblical witness which concerns reconciled man as such-constructing a doctrine of [christology] in which the man reconciled with God is basically absent, or at any rate invisible' (CD IV/2, 7).

### III. Under the Umbrella of *Deus pro nobis*

Another corresponding term of Barth's for incarnation is seen in '*Deus pro nobis*.' The referent of *Immanuel* and *Deus pro nobis* is incarnation. Having dealt with the former term, here we will probe into the meaning of the latter term.

Barth sums up and explicates the whole act of reconciliation in terms of *Deus pro nobis*. In doing so, he proposes the view that Jesus Christ is the 'pre-existent *Deus pro nobis*' (CD IV/1, 53). This means that God is by nature not for Himself but for humankind. This nature of God is manifested in the divine self-incarnation, i.e., flesh. We will argue that Barth has a christology 'from below', 'low', to the extent that, first, God is *by nature for us*; second, this nature of 'for-us-ness' is demonstrated by nothing other than in and through the *flesh*; and third, the divine movement 'from above' is for the sake of human exaltation 'from below to above'.

### 1. The Meaning of the Statement that 'God Truly Became a Human Being'

To be flesh means to exist with the people in a state of perishing before God. The New Testament witnesses that the Son of God was a human being and as such '*He* stands under the wrath and judgment of God, *He* is broken and destroyed on God. It cannot be otherwise' (CD IV/1, 175). The Son of God in His 'unity' with the man Jesus of Nazareth exists 'in solidarity' with the humanity of suffering Israel. This means that

In Him [the man Jesus of Nazareth] God has entered in, breaking into that *circulus vitiosus* of the human plight, making His own not only the guilt of man but also his rejection and condemnation, giving Himself to bear the divinely righteous consequences of human sin, not merely affirming the divine sentence on man, but allowing it to be fulfilled on Himself (CD IV/1, 175).

It is God *Himself* who takes all<sup>39</sup> human sufferings upon Himself. This being and act is the 'mystery of the "deity of Christ"' (CD IV/1, 177) which is 'new in relation to all general concepts of God ... and to that extent in a way which is not perceived or known' (CD IV/1, 176). The divine incarnation means God's 'direct' revelation 'in the secret of the man Jesus of Nazareth' (CD IV/1, 176).

Barth, at this juncture, raises three fundamental theological questions, and as such christological questions, in describing the divine movement 'from above'. The questions are of the incarnation in its possibility, in its necessity, and in its relevance, which will be dealt with in the following section III. We will now unveil these three fundamental issues, since these questions constitute the very content of the christology 'from above', and as such what these constitutions mean in conjunction with our thesis.

#### 1) The Possibility of the Incarnation

Having asserted that God became flesh, the question arises: how is it possible for a holy God to become a sinful human being? If we accept Paul's

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<sup>39</sup> The difference between His suffering and human sufferings in the Old Testament is that whereas the latter consists in the antithesis between the righteous God and humanity's acceptance of bitter things from Him without grumbling, the former consists in the elimination of the antithesis by allowing all the human bitterness of its suffering to fall upon Himself (CD IV/1, 175).

avowal, that all human beings are sinners, where does that leave the man Jesus of Nazareth who is confessed to be the Christ? If we accept that He is sinless,<sup>40</sup> does the incarnation not suggest a strange half-human being and half-divine being? From a human point of view the divine incarnation is not possible at all since God is God

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<sup>40</sup> Barth gives a new understanding of sin and sinlessness. Traditionally sin was understood in a biological sense or as abstract and absolute purity, morality, and virtue. But according to Barth, Jesus was a man as we are. His condition was not different from ours. He took our flesh, the 'nature' (CD IV/1, 258) of humankind. 'His sinlessness was not therefore His condition. It was the *act* of His being in which He defeated temptation in His condition which is ours, in the flesh' (CD IV/1, 259 ea). 'All the purity of His human action depends upon the purity of this [Royal Man's] life-act of His. ... the sinlessness of Jesus was not a condition of His being as man, but the human act of His life working itself out in this way from its origin' (CD IV/2, 92). In other words, Jesus is sinless not due to the inherited physical body but due to the *free act of obedience* to the Father's will unto death. He did not refuse the necessity of God's judgment and remission of human sins, but accepted that God was doing right (CD IV/1, 257-283; IV/2, 58). Similarly, Pittenger supposes the sinlessness of Jesus in terms of His 'love-in-action' and 'acceptance' of His vocation. In an attempt to understand the sinlessness of Jesus, Pittenger argues that, since a human being is a dynamic creature, it should be understood in terms of 'becoming' rather than 'being.' Humanity exists 'on the way to becoming' by moving towards the realisation of fulfilment or potentiality. This 'becoming' in movement implies the fact that humanity exists in what it chooses. Hence, humanity does not sin of itself but by its act of choice. Only this understanding of human existence exempts the Christian (and Jewish) God from being an immoral God. For if humanity is sinful of itself or soon after its birth (which is accepting so called 'original sin'), then God cannot avoid His responsibility for human sin however we argue. It should also be noted that this futuristic understanding of humanity would keep our confession of the 'goodness' of creation (Norman Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered*, [SCM Press, 1970], pp. 45-65).

Fundamentally speaking, the sinlessness of Jesus originates from His divinity (CD IV/2, 92-96). Like His existence, the sinlessness of His human essence is grace. The grace of the origin of Jesus means that 'the basic exaltation of his human freedom to its truth, i.e., to the obedience in whose exercise it is not super-human but true human freedom' (CD IV/2, 92). He could not sin 'Because and as He was man only as the Son of God, it [sin] was excluded from the choice of His acts' (CD IV/2, 93). He 'lived as a man in this true human freedom ... for obedience' not knowing or having any other freedom (CD IV/2, 93). At this point Barth argues that this unique reality of the humanity of Jesus does not contradict the concept of true humanity. A striking point is that this unique reality rather contradicts all other actualizations of this concept of true humanity (CD IV/2, 95). 'It [the sinlessness of Jesus] consists in His actual freedom from sin itself, from the basis of all sins' (CD IV/1, 258). That is why He could forgive sins and transgressions. 'Without sin' means that He 'did not will' to sin and 'did not' sin even though He shared our mode of existence (CD IV/2, 92-93, 58) even though He was so tempted. He became a sinner only as He bears human sin upon Himself. By bearing our sins in this way He exists in solidarity with us in our lostness.

However this raises some questions. *Firstly*, are we sinners because we will to sin? Paul's lamentation caused by his unwilling sins may suggest this. *Secondly*, why is it that we do sin even though we too exist by the grace of God? Does Barth apply two types of graces here? If Jesus was, and is, sinless because He did not will to sin and did not sin, then could He have been 'fully human'? As Barth says that He is also a creature, would this not mean that Jesus was 'created', not to have will to sin and not to sin, and as such He would have possessed a different 'kind' of humanity rather than a different humanity in 'degree'?

and human being is human being.

The uniqueness of Barth's christology consists in his view of the possibility of the incarnation. Barth argues that, as far as the Subject of incarnation is God, the possibility of the divine self-incarnation must be perceived from the standpoint of God, '*Quo iure Deus homo?*,' and not from the standpoint of human beings. This implies that human beings cannot limit the acts of God to the parameters of human reason. If God were fully understood by human reason, then God would be no more than a mere object of human reasoning. Barth thus underlines that the only possibility of incarnation is to be found in the *divine freedom of love*. God is not His own prisoner but free and sovereign, as witnessed in the Philippians 2:7-8. This free act of love demonstrates that God is, by nature, for human beings. His free incarnation is then, the revelation of the greatest glory of God Himself because incarnation manifests His true nature that He is *free in love*.<sup>41</sup>

Barth recognises two possible misinterpretations of the possibility of the divine self-incarnation. *Firstly*, one may regard His incarnation as a 'non-historical' (CD IV/1, 157) event. To hold the view of 'non-historical,' which denies the actuality of God's incarnation, is tempting in the cause of guarding the 'absolute authority' and the 'trueness' of God. To wit, God must remain as God somewhere above human reality in order to sustain His absolute dominion over human beings, and thus God's incarnation should be impossible. At the same time, to deny God's incarnation would be convenient, for then we would not need to take any risks in our faith. In fact, we could not have seen or experienced His incarnation. As we have discussed in the earlier chapter, faith is the venture of acceptance of the witnesses of Scripture.

Barth rejects the view of a 'non-historical' revelation for the following reasons. To deny the divine incarnation would be to envision the authority of God

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<sup>41</sup> (CD IV/1, 187-192; IV/2, 84-85). Freedom does not imply love. But love presupposes freedom, since love is not static but dynamic. To put divine freedom and love together, '... in God freedom is the form of love, but love is the content, the *body of freedom*' (Christoph Schwöbel, 'Imago Libertatis: Human and Divine Freedom' in: *God and Freedom* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995], p. 80).

in the human category of possibility, which thus also denies our reconciliation itself. So Barth spurns the view of a 'non-historical' incarnation by stressing that the incarnation is 'the very special history'<sup>42</sup> of God with humanity in which the impossibility became reality, that the holy God became a sinful man by taking all human sin upon Himself. This reality was the result of God's definite decision and the Son's infinite obedience, and thereby the man Jesus of Nazareth Himself constantly 'attests'<sup>43</sup> to His unity with God. Jesus Christ, through becoming a human being, has demolished humanity's false view of true divine authority by showing that true divine authority is in humiliation. This being the case, any supernatural or other-worldly gods are the reflection of human 'pride.' Human pride rejects this humiliated God, not only because it is an unbelievable event, but also because human beings do not want to lose their autonomy by accepting a humiliated God.<sup>44</sup> To keep the autonomy of humankind in rejecting the humiliated

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<sup>42</sup> The history of incarnation is not a contingent event in that it is a simple fact or event which once happened 'there' and 'then'. Rather, the history of incarnation has meaning, since it is the content of a determined divine will and act based on God's covenant. So Barth uses the term '*Geschichte*' rather than '*Historie*' in order to stress the dynamism as well as the significance of the event. *Geschichte* means story. This implies that our task is to 'recount' or 'repeat' this significant history as story, in order to understand it, since human thought and language cannot grasp the event of reconciliation (CD IV/1, 175; KD IV/1, 171; CD IV/3.1, 165-166; Barth, 'The Gift of Freedom,' in: *The Humanity of God* [1961 [1956]], p. 81). (=Barth, *Gift*)

<sup>43</sup> God is known in 'His self-exposition' (CD IV/2, 39). Jüngel paraphrases it: in revelation God 'interprets' Himself. To wit, God interprets through God, that is, 'self-interpretation' (Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming* [1976 [=1964]], p. 95).

<sup>44</sup> (CD IV/1, 159; KD IV/1, 173: '*Hochmut*'). As for Barth, this 'pride,' standing in contrast to the Son's 'obedience,' is the overall concept of human sin. The consequence of humanities pride was the 'fall.' For Barth's intensive discussion of sin in terms of 'pride' see (CD IV/1, 142, 358, 412-419, 421-423). Niebuhr and Tillich also share Barth's view of sin: (Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man I* [London: Nisbet, 1941], pp. 198-220; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology II* [London: SCM Press, 1978], pp. 47-50).

Yet McFadyen asserts that to understand sin as essentially 'pride' is 'problematic' and even 'error.' This view of sin regards 'pride' as the 'primal' and 'basic' form of sin. In so doing, it construes divine and human freedom as 'competitive.' And this view of sin equates any human 'self-assertion' as sinful. Yet human 'pride' is not the basic or the root, of sin like idolatry but is 'a form' of idolatry, because the essence of human 'pride' is 'actually a particular misdirection' of self-worship. 'Pride' need not be equated with all acts of human self-assertion, self-protection or self-retrieval, because they could, at times, create positive conditions for the right worship of God even though 'pride' constitutes a sin. Instead, sin is the denial of God and refusal to praise God; the opposition to and assault on God's freedom (Alistair McFadyen, 'Sins of Praise: The Assault on God's Freedom' in: *God and Freedom*, (ed) Colin E. Gunton, [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995],



God means that humanity wishes to justify its unbelief by which it effectively remains lord of itself.

According to Barth, God's definite decision and the Son's indefinite obedience come from the *inner decision* of the Godhead. The inner decision constitutes the 'genuine article' (CD IV/1, 193) of theology since it is the work of divine ontology. The most significant inner decision is that the truth and actuality of our atonement is based upon the *sameness* of the one who decided to be humiliated and the one who was humiliated. Namely, this congruence manifests the *immovable determination* of God to be incarnate and the *undeniable reality* of our reconciliation, because the incarnation is the self-actualisation of the self-decision of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hence His incarnation can neither be that of a victim driven to and fro by the dialectic of His nature, nor by inescapable fate. The incarnation was nothing other than 'the inner necessity' of the freedom of God. This means that God is always His own Master, 'His own counterpart,' and 'co-existent with Himself' (CD IV/1, 192-195; 201). In this view, Barth redefines the notion of the divine unity. The unity of the Godhead is dynamic and alive, and this can in no way infer a static sense of solidarity or singleness. Unity means God's fellowship, i.e., relationship. This understanding is undergirded by the incarnation as the incarnation corresponds to His inner being, that is the relational being of the Trinity. The trinitarian freedom is relational freedom. This ontology alone is the inner possibility of the incarnation.<sup>45</sup>

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p. 36, 54).

However, McFadyen's unclear explanation rather spoils the reasonableness of his critique on the traditional view of sin as 'pride.' It is, for example, not clear what he means by 'pride' as 'actually a particular misdirection' of self-worship. Does McFadyen mean that humanity's self-worship is 'not real' idolatry but 'a form' of idolatry, because self-worship is 'a particular,' and thus only one of many misdirections? More confusing is that he holds idolatry as the root of sin, and idolatry is 'worshipping something or someone instead of God'. But at the same time he does not seem to regard 'pride' as idolatry by defining 'pride' only as 'a form of idolatry.' Incidentally, it is not clear why, and how, the concept of 'transcendence-immanence' should become his hermeneutical basis in developing the 'divine freedom and human freedom' and 'freedom and sin' (*ibid.*, 32-56, esp. 33-36).

<sup>45</sup> (CD IV/1, 164-166). Incarnation is, as such, the activation and the revelation of Christ's deity, His divine Sonship (CD IV/1, 201-210). This insight of 'relational ontology' is developed by Jürgen Moltmann. According to Moltmann the doctrine of the Trinity would be more meaningful



Secondly, Barth repudiates the attempts to regard the possibilities of the divine self-incarnation noetically and logically as human paradox, or ontically as the divine self-contradiction, a 'cleft' or 'rift' or 'gulf' in between His being and His act.<sup>46</sup> Such possibilities could have been based upon God's determination to be 'God against God'.<sup>47</sup> Thus the cry of Jesus Christ on the cross (Mk 15:34) would have meant God's disposal of Jesus Christ for good. However God does not come into conflict with Himself.<sup>48</sup> 'God gives Himself, but He does not give Himself away.'<sup>49</sup> The problem is that if we were to understand the possibility of incarnation in terms of paradox, then we may assume or even postulate the scheme of human paradox as a necessity for the possibility. Ultimately humanity will categorise the act of divine self-incarnation into the human *ratio*. Humanity, however, cannot impose any necessity upon God. If it insists that it could, then humanity would create another god with whom we would remain unreconciled. For any god created by human imposition is nothing other than the god of human desire.<sup>50</sup>

Further, to ground the possibility of the divine self-incarnation upon a divine

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if we were to perceive it as a 'relational being' rather than as a 'substance.' In such a way, the doctrine of the Trinity undergirds the kingdom of God as the trinitarian kingdom. This insight serves the three theological grounds: firstly, to overcome the schism between the different Church traditions; secondly, to see the meaning of human suffering in connection with the question of the existence of a living God; thirdly, social and economic justice (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* [London: SCM Press, 1981], pp. 1-222).

<sup>46</sup> '... noetisch mit dem Faktum einer Kluft, eines Risses und Abgrundes in Gott selber, zwischen seinem Sein und Wesen in sich und seinem Tun und Wirken ...' (KD IV/1, 201).

<sup>47</sup> (CD IV/1, 183-185; 'Gott wider Gott' KD IV/1, 201). Interestingly enough, Moltmann uses the phrase 'Gott gegen Gott' which is the crucial insight of the crucified God. Moltmann sees the 'Gott gegen Gott' as the trinitarian act of a 'theological trial (*theologischer Prozess*)' (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* [London: SCM Press, 1974 [=1973]], pp. 151-153).

<sup>48</sup> 'He makes His own the being of man in contradiction against Him, but He does not make common cause with it' (CD IV/1, 185).

<sup>49</sup> (CD IV/1, 185). 'Gott gibt sich hin, aber nicht weg und nicht auf' (KD IV/1, 202). 'When He [God] dies in His unity with this man, death does not gain any power over Him.' 'He overcomes the flesh in becoming flesh' (CD IV/1, 185). Because He was 'dying the death,' overcoming the death.

<sup>50</sup> (CD IV/1, 185-186). 'He becomes and is this [the true God being's being truly identical with the obedient man Jesus of Nazareth] without being in contrast to His divine nature ... but in contradiction to all human ideas about the divine nature' (CD IV/1, 199).

self-contradiction is untenable. Self-contradiction produces nothing but another contradiction, and thus the former being differs from the latter being. The truth and actuality of our atonement depends upon the fact that God does not become another deity in His incarnation or He would not dissolve Himself into the world.<sup>51</sup> Self-contradiction therefore does not give us the reliability or the authenticity of God being the true Reconciler.<sup>52</sup> Self-contradiction leads to self-destruction as there is contradiction within itself. To safeguard the true possibility of God's incarnation from such misunderstandings, Barth contends that in God there is nothing like paradox, antinomy, diversion, inconsistency, or the possibility of such things. A god who has such contradictions is the result of human projection, and not the revealed God. For any self-contradictory god has no true power to reveal itself fully and completely since it cannot have a definite act and voice on account of its inner contradiction.<sup>53</sup> If God's humility is not a capricious or accidental choice but a free choice,<sup>54</sup> and if what the human person Jesus does is God's own work, then His self-emptying is not an alien act, a '*novum mysterium*'<sup>55</sup> for God at all. In other words, the true deity and the Lordship of Christ consist in the freedom that His existence in the '*forma servi*' does not cease to be Lord and Creator in His existence in the '*forma Dei*' and *vice versa*.<sup>56</sup> These forms are a matter of the 'different modes of the one personal God.'<sup>57</sup> 'The true and living God is the One

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<sup>51</sup> 'Die Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit unserer Versöhnung hängt daran, daß es so und nicht anders ist. Der die Welt mit Gott versöhnt, muß der eine Gott selber in seiner wahren Gottheit sein. Sonst würde sie nie mit Gott versöhnt' (KD IV/1, 211).

<sup>52</sup> (CD IV/1, 193). Otherwise He cannot be the Subject of our reconciliation since He would be no more than like us.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor 14:33 (CD IV/1, 186-187).

<sup>54</sup> 'It [the act of atonement made in the man Jesus of Nazareth] can demand obedience because it is not itself an arbitrary decision but a decision of obedience. That is why it is so important to see that this is the character of the self-humiliation of God in Jesus Christ as the presupposition of our reconciliation' (CD IV/1, 195).

<sup>55</sup> (CD IV/1, 193). Though it is very strange to us, it is never strange to God (CD IV/1, 178-180).

<sup>56</sup> (CD IV/1, 181). This resulted in Barth's rejection of the Nestorian separation of the divine and human natures (*ibid*).

<sup>57</sup> '*modus*': '*Seinsweisen*' (CD IV/1, 205; KD 224). The incarnation is 'the act of God in His mode of being as the Son' (CD IV/2, 43). Barth here turns to his trinitarian hermeneutics for an

whose Godhead consists in this history, who is in these three modes of being the One God, the Eternal, the Almighty, the Holy, the merciful, the One who loves in His freedom and is free in His love' (CD IV/1, 203). That is to say, the 'sovereign grace,' the 'free love' (CD IV/1, 193) of God alone is the possibility of divine self-incarnation. Our reconciliation has its being with, and anchors itself in, this divine free initiation.<sup>58</sup>

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appropriate expression. According to Barth, God is not only immanent *ad intra* but also transcendent *ad extra*. Seen from the obedience of Jesus Christ, incarnation is a matter of 'the mystery of the inner being of God as the being of the Son in relation to the Father' (CD IV/1, 177; cf. 194). From the point of view of that form, that character of the obedience, incarnation is a matter of 'mystery of His deity in His work *ad extra*, in His presence in the world' (CD IV/1, 177). God has this freedom of condescension as well as concealment of His Godhead without any loss, diminution or alteration (CD IV/1, 180).

<sup>58</sup> Davaney and Williams argue that Barth's emphasis upon the divine sovereignty and freedom leads us to a notion of the God-world relation in purely dichotomous terms, which eventually divests the concept of divine power, freedom, and love of their social content. Thus tensions arise between divine action, human integrity and responsibility (Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Divine Power. A Study of Karl Barth and Charles Hartshorne* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], pp. 1-100; R.D. Williams, 'Barth on the Triune God' in: *Karl Barth - Studies of his Theological Methods*, ed. S. W. Sykes [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], pp. 147-193). Similarly, Biggar argues that Barth's awesome emphasis upon the divine grace 'removes the deep and mysterious seriousness of human moral responsibility, and accordingly diminishes human dignity' (Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits. Karl Barth's Ethics* [Oxford, 1993], p. 162). An even a harsher comment is that 'Barth seems ... to reduce man as created by God to an empty and impotent vessel into which God later pours his grace ...' (Arnold Come, *An Introduction to Barth's 'Dogmatics' for Preachers* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963], p. 152).

However we see that Barth states that 'Being, human thanksgiving, has the character of responsibility' (CD III/2, 174), humanity is subject to 'pure spontaneity' (CD III/2, 174), because God '... has not ... made [humanity's] obedience physically necessary or disobedience physically impossible' (CD III/1, 266). Also, Gunton, in reference to the *Church Dogmatics*: II/2, 76, 177, 585; III/1, 175; IV/1, 89, 91, holds that Barth's understanding of God fully admits human freedom and therefore allows room for human responsibility and autonomy (Colin E. Gunton, 'The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature' in: *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. S. W. Sykes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], pp. 46-66). Webster also shares a similar view with Gunton observing that Barth's understanding of freedom is not primarily a matter of will or choice considered either as ends in themselves or as essential marks of human dignity. Rather, for him, 'moral freedom is consent to the necessary character of the moral order of God: it is "situated freedom"' (John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* [Cambridge, 1995], 227). For a recent discussion about the issues on God's freedom, human freedom, divine sovereignty, and human responsibility, see (Colin E. Gunton ed., *God and Freedom* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995], pp. 1-133; a similar view is shared by Macken, but with some critical questions (John Macken S.J., *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics* [Cambridge University Press, 1990], pp. 22-182, esp. 60-69, 154-159, 159-182).

## 2) The Necessity of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion

The witnesses of Scripture tell us that God became a human being in order to save the world. In other words, God had to become incarnate in order to concretely end the world's self-destruction since the world was self-destructing by attempting to become its own master. But this does not mute the question as to why God's salvific act had to be in this way? Did He not have other ways of reconciling the world with Himself in lieu of becoming flesh and suffering a bloody death? In short, was the incarnation and such a bloody crucifixion really necessary?<sup>59</sup>

Barth hears the great positive answer through the 1 John 4:14 'the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world' with concern for 'order' and 'peace' (CD IV/1, 216-217). But this is the answer of the grace of God. This means that the grace of God is not a cheap grace, but dear enough to send His Son as the Saviour of the world. Humankind set up its own authority against God by seeking its justification from itself and not from God.<sup>60</sup> But this achieved nothing other than the killing of the innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth. Necessarily therefore God had to encounter humankind in flesh and face it as the ultimate Judge.<sup>61</sup> What

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<sup>59</sup> This question had already been raised by St. Anselm in terms of 'Cur Deus homo?' in: (*The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. X*. [London: SCM Press, 1956], pp. 100-183). God did not have to become a human being. But when He did that, He manifested His divine omnipotence (*ibid.*, 150-155). Whereas, for Barth, the incarnation and crucifixion was the divine necessity out of His free love.

For an excellent presentation of the analysis, critique, and suggestions about the traditional models of soteriology in connection with the question of the necessity of the incarnation and crucifixion see (Thorwald Lorenzen, 'The Meaning of the Death of Jesus Christ' in *American Baptist Quarterly* 4 [No.1, 1985], pp. 3-34). Likewise, McIntyre supposes that the bloody crucifixion was inevitable since 'love already entails suffering'. For a discussion about this issue of the necessity see (John McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology* [Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1992], pp. 1-129) in which McIntyre analyses the thirteen traditional models of soteriology, which interestingly include the motif of the 'liberation' in the Liberation Theology. In sum, the gist of the book is that any single model cannot sufficiently answer the question of why God become incarnated and was crucified. Although each model has its own message therefore, all thirteen models require to be taken together in order to provide the complete soteriological future.

<sup>60</sup> 'Not all men commit this[=these] sins, but all men commit this sin which is the essence and root of all other sins' (CD IV/1, 220).

<sup>61</sup> 'If He were not the Judge, He would not be the Saviour' (CD IV/1, 217). Barth refers to the following passages for Jesus Christ's involvement of being the Judge: Matt 3:12, 8-9, 14-15, 7:24f., 10:32-34, 38-39, 11:20f., 23:13-36; Mk 1:4-5; Lk 3:7, 10f., 12:49; Jn 3:36, 12:48, 5:22, 24, 27, 30, 9:41, 15:22-24; Ac 10:42, 17:30f., 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1; Rev 1:16; Heb 12:29; Rom 1:18-3:20

happened after the incarnation is that the Son of God fulfilled the requirement for the righteous judgment on humankind by Himself taking its place of condemnation and destruction as a human being. His taking its place means that the Judge was judged. He was capable of doing this because He was a *human being* like us (CD IV/1, 222-223). This judgment took place once and for all, and as such, it measures all human righteousness and judgment. So it is the 'ultimate judgment' (CD IV/1, 219). At this point we have to note that Barth underlines that the ground of this eschatological event, the incarnation and the crucifixion, is the *humanity* of Christ: 'It [incarnation and crucifixion] took place in the one man' (CD IV/1, 223). The event occurred in the world at a 'definite place' and a 'definite point of time' (*kairos*).<sup>62</sup> God took a *visible responsibility* for His creation, albeit He did not have to. This unnecessary implies that God had to vindicate being the true Creator by defending Himself. God is primarily *pro se* and then *pro nobis et pro me* (CD IV/1, 212). Yet we have to be careful not to misunderstand this statement as if God exists exclusively for Himself. Rather this is to say that the act of the incarnation and the crucifixion is nothing but the free grace of God Himself. This indicates how serious<sup>63</sup> human sin is and how serious the determination of God is to eliminate it. The honour and glory of God is offended<sup>64</sup> not because His holiness is damaged, but because His people are estranged from Him. That is to say, that God

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(CD IV/1, 217-219).

<sup>62</sup> (CD IV/1, 223). Here again, when we consider the true *ground* of the eschatological event, we must point out that charging Barth as having a christology 'from above', or 'high' christology, is too superficial. In addition, we must note that, for Barth, meaning and interpretation does not precede fact or history. The significance, the meaning or the interpretation, is based upon the historical fact. The event of the incarnation and crucifixion is a unique and singular historical occurrence (CD IV/1, 223-225).

<sup>63</sup> 'The very heart of the atonement is the overcoming of sin' (CD IV/1, 253).

<sup>64</sup> This issue of divine honour has already been raised by Anselm of Canterbury. But the difference is that, whereas Anselm is mainly concerned with God's divine honour itself from the sovereignty of God, Barth observes the divine honour from the standpoint of the love of God (Anselm, 'Why God became Man?' in: *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol X. [1956] pp. 100-183, esp. 119). The offence which God felt, which resulted in His incarnation and crucifixion, is the 'mystery of His mercy' which is also the 'mystery of His righteousness.' *Cur Deus homo?* Because He did not take the unreconciled world lightly, but 'in all seriousness. He did not will [=undertake] to overcome and remove it from without, but from within' (CD IV/1, 237).



defends Himself because He is by nature for human beings: 'He is mindful of man because ... His own glory and man's salvation, man's salvation and His own glory, are not two things but one.'<sup>65</sup> His defense, that is His self-vindication, stands for nothing but for *our* salvation: 'He does not *become* "for us" when there is some self-fulfilment either with or after Him, but He *is* for us in Him' (CD IV/1, 229 ea). This is what Barth means when he says that God is primarily for Himself but being for Himself He is for us.<sup>66</sup> So if we push to brinkmanship, this divine self-vindication needs to be understood in terms of 'divine ordination (*göttliche Verordnung*)' (CD IV/2, 290; KD 322) based upon 'divine necessity and freedom'<sup>67</sup> or 'divine right (*göttliches Recht*)' (CD IV/1, 10; KD 9). The divine self-incarnation and crucifixion takes place in the 'inner necessity of the freedom of God and not in the play of sovereign *liberum arbitrium*.'<sup>68</sup> His vindication of us which is based upon the 'divine necessity' is most vividly manifested in the crucifixion. The crucifixion explains the *what* of *Deus pro nobis* which entails four

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<sup>65</sup> (CD IV/3.1, 228). This identification is the 'divine self-purpose' (CD IV/1, 212). Barth notes such a mysterious self-vindication of self-glory in this way: 'If we will not accept the fact that God is also and primarily *pro se*, we shall find it hard to understand what it means that in being *pro se* He is also *pro nobis*, and therefore *pro me*' (*ibid*).

<sup>66</sup> (CD IV/1, 212-223). God being 'for us' means that He took our place to save us without any co-operation on our part. Salvation does not need any completion because it has already been perfected. Reconciliation, thus, is not one act among other divine acts, but it is the central act (CD IV/1, 239; 211-283).

<sup>67</sup> (CD IV/1, 239; '*göttliche Notwendigkeit und Freiheit*' KD 263). Moltmann revises the traditional views of atonement theories: satisfaction theory, ransom theory, expiation theory. The problem and limit of these sacrificial theologies, according to Moltmann, is that they attempted to resolve sin by 'objectifying' it. This attempt adopted the system of scapegoat which led us to understand the necessity of the crucifixion in a legalistic concept: 'sin will be pardoned only when it has the same amount or quality of compensation'. But Moltmann insists that sin has to be understood in 'relational' and 'personal' terms, because it is not the objectified sin, but humanity that needs to be justified and pardoned. Hence God suffering death on the cross must be understood in these relational and personal terms. In other words God did not suffer death on account of this legalistic reason, but because His loving relationship with us is too great to be broken and too personal to bypass us (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* [London: SCM Press, 1992], pp. 132-136).

<sup>68</sup> (CD IV/1, 195). The event has to do with the 'divine commission,' 'divine execution,' 'divine order,' and 'divine obedience' (*ibid*).



fundamental elements.<sup>69</sup>

*Firstly*, that Jesus Christ was crucified means that humankind rejected God in order to be its own Judge, and strove to control its relationship with God and its fellow-human beings in accordance with its own values of good and evil. But allowing the crucifixion, *God rejected human rejection and as such became the Judge*.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the crucifixion shows that the result of humankind being its own judge brought nothing but the death of Jesus. Thus the crucifixion paradoxically declares humankind to be false judges. This means that the crucifixion is God's negation of human negation by judging human judgment (CD IV/1, 231-235).

*Secondly*, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ means that *He took the place of us sinners*.<sup>71</sup> This is difficult to accept no matter how we explain it. But what we could at least say is there are three directions to the fact. First, if Jesus Christ made our evil case His own, He is the 'supremely objective source of knowledge' in the sense that 'In face of [facing] Jesus Christ we are forced to a simple recognition of the nature of evil as that which is against God, and of the fact that we do it' (CD IV/1, 240). Second, He entirely deals with our evil case as the 'Representative' (CD IV/1, 241). Third, this being the case, there is nothing more we can seek and do even as evil does (CD IV/1, 242-244).

*Thirdly*, that Jesus Christ is for us means that He *suffered* and was *crucified to death*.<sup>72</sup> Barth draws our 'very special attention' (CD IV/1, 244) to the

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<sup>69</sup> Barth employs juridical terms for the explanation of the content of the crucifixion. He acknowledges using other terms as a possibility too: financial terms (Mk 10:45; 1 Pet 1:18; Tit 2:14; Rom 3:24; Gal 3:13, 4:5), military terms (Mk 3:27; Col 1:13; Eph 6:11f.), or cultic terms in the Hebrews, Johannine writings, and Pauline epistles (CD IV/1, 274).

<sup>70</sup> It can also be said that 'He is the Priest who represented us' (CD IV/1, 275).

<sup>71</sup> It can also be said that 'He gave Himself to be offered up as a sacrifice to take away our sins' (CD IV/1, 277).

<sup>72</sup> In cultic terminology this is equivalent to saying that 'He has made a perfect sacrifice' (CD IV/1, 281). Barth believes that the death of Jesus Christ on Golgotha alone is the 'one *mysterium*, the one sacrament' (CD IV/1, 296). This view extends to rejecting baptism, including infant baptism, and eucharist as sacraments. Barth distinguishes the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the baptism with water to order to indicate that the Church ceremony of Baptism is not a Christian sacrament, but a human action. The reason why Jesus Christ alone, i.e., His death alone, is the

crucifixion since it is *the* aim of the divine movement 'from above', the way of the Son of God into the far country. The crucifixion is not a fate but the self-determined act of God Himself. The crucifixion is the 'true fulfilment' (CD IV/1, 244) of God's for-us-ness in Jesus Christ. In such a way the divine movement 'from above' is *completed* in this event of crucifixion.<sup>73</sup> To be specific, what took place in this passion is our 'reconciliation' and 'atonement' with God, and 'conversion' to God.<sup>74</sup> As such, 'all theology lives by the fact that the cross of Jesus Christ is itself the work and therefore the wholly sufficient Word of God.'<sup>75</sup>

*Fourthly*, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the *righteousness of God*. Humankind is created to be free in its obedience to God. Yet it disobeys God and forfeits its freedom through disobedience. This is the unrighteousness of humankind. Whereas Jesus Christ who is God Himself obeyed even to death - 'the freedom of God Himself, has the character of obedience' (CD IV/1, 258) - in order to regain the original righteousness of humankind. The crucifixion in this way demonstrates the righteousness of God Himself. The righteousness of God is that whereas humankind insists on the death of sinners God insists on the life and forgiveness of sinners. As such, the crucifixion is the ultimate judgment of divine

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Christian sacrament, is that He and the event of crucifixion alone makes people Christian, through the power (baptism) of the Holy Spirit. 'Baptism responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, ... It is not itself, however, a mystery or sacrament' (CD IV/4, [1969:1968] 102). (=CD IV/4). For Barth's careful demythologisation of the traditional understanding of baptism see (CD IV/4, 103-128) Eberhard Jüngel's reflection on Barth's understanding of baptism see ('Karl Barths Lehre von der Taufe. Ein Hinweis auf ihre Probleme,' [1968] in: *Barthstudien. ökumenische Theologie, Band 9* [Zürich-Köln: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, Benziger Verlag, 1982], pp. 246-290; cf. pp. 291-314).

<sup>73</sup> The 'completion,' 'true fulfilment,' and 'the act of God Himself' indicates the universality of the particular event. If the event is truly a completing and fulfilling act of God Himself, and it happened only once, then the event should claim its universality not in spite of, but because of, its particularity. If this were not the case, then a second or third event of crucifixion would have to occur as the first event is not powerful enough to embrace all the world once and for all. Also, to this extent, our situation has 'objectively been decisively changed' irrespective of human recognition (CD IV/1, 245).

<sup>74</sup> (CD IV/1, 250-251). 1 Cor 11:25; Lk 22:20; Mk 14:24; Matt 26:28; Rom 5:1f., 10; 2 Cor 5:18f.; Col 1:20, 22; Eph 2:14, 16; 1 Pet 3:18; Heb 10:19f., (CD IV/1, 252).

<sup>75</sup> (CD IV/1, 250). Accordingly the content of the Christian proclamation is "crucified God" and it is *pro nobis*: 1 Cor 1:18, 23, 11:26; Rom 8:32, 14:15; Gal 2:20; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 Thess 5:9; Heb 2:9; Jn 15:13, 10:11 (*ibid*).

love and therefore perfect love. In this way Barth's whole theology converges into his theological axiom that all theology depends upon the '*theologia crucis*.'<sup>76</sup>

Barth, concerning the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, admits there could be much more painful and unjustly sufferings than that of Jesus' in world history. However, the unique and special thing about the passion of Jesus Christ consists of the person and mission of Jesus Himself. He is the 'eternal God' the Judge, and yet He stands to be judged. The subject of judgment becomes the object of judgment. The crucifixion is not simply the humiliation of a relatively innocent creature, nor is it a question of theodicy: How can God will or permit crucifixion in the world which He has created good? It is the suffering and 'dishonouring' (CD IV/1, 246) of *God Himself*. It is a matter of the answer to the question that in this

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<sup>76</sup> (CD IV/1, 284-288, 250). We would prefer the word *crucifixionis* to the conventional word *crucis* since we suppose the former conception is much more vivid and dynamic in conveying the power and the meaning of the Golgotha event, whilst the latter phrase is somewhat abstract and thus has much more of the flavour of symbol.

Moltmann also affirms that the *theologia crucifixionis* is the 'centre' of all Christian theology (Moltmann, *The Crucified God* 204, 153). Seeing the crucifixion from a trinitarian perspective, the cry of Jesus on the cross 'My God, why have you forsaken *me*?' also means 'My God, why have you forsaken *yourself*?' (*ibid.*, 151). The centrality of the crucifixion in Christian theology is the retrieval of Luther's theology of cross that 'in Christ crucified is the true theology and the knowledge of God - '*In Christo crucifixio est vera theologia et cognitio Dei*' (Martin Luther, 'The Heidelberg Disputation XX' [1518] in: *The Library of Christian Classics* Vol XVI. [1962], p. 291). 'The Almighty exists and acts and speaks here in the form of One who is weak and impotent, the eternal as One who is temporal and perishing, the Most High in the deepest humility' (CD IV/1, 176). Only the true God can humiliate Himself even into 'dying the death ([*den*] *Tod sterben*)' (CD IV/1, 130; KD 142).

Further, the *theologia crucifixionis*, which is God's self-manifestation of His for-us-ness, rejects any attempt to understand the incarnation and crucifixion as an anthropological, psychological or sociological myth. *Theologia crucifixionis* remythologises all demythologisation of the event of reconciliation (CD IV/1, 273). We see Barth's significant view when he says that 'To put it ["Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39)] in epigrammatic form, the "handing over" of Jesus on the morning of Good Friday was the founding of the Church as a Church of both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore of a missionary Church' (CD IV/2, 263).

Incidentally, what Barth means by this phrase 'dying the death' is that although the crucifixion means that God 'gave Himself up' for us, this 'giving up' is by no means God 'giving Himself away' (CD IV/2, 260). God truly experienced death on the cross. But death is not the final word for Him. This dual emphases that on the one hand God really died on the cross, and yet on the other hand death is not the last word, is what Barth intends when he says that the resurrection means that Jesus Christ came not only from 'dying (*Sterben*)' (God's true experience of death), but also from 'death (*Tod*)' (death is not the last word for God) in the most stringent sense (CD IV/2, 151-152; KD 169).

humiliation God is supremely God by being alive in the death. Moreover, this human passion was not confined within itself but reaches out to all humankind as the redemptive judgment of God and, as such, as the reconciliation of the world with God. The passion does not merely have to do with something or some issue but has to do with everything. Through the passion God confronted and shattered not merely the consequences of sin and death but sin and death itself, the 'eternal death.'<sup>77</sup> The passion re-established the broken original relationship between God and humankind. So it is 'the comprehensive turning in the history of all creation' (CD IV/1, 247). This is how the passion of Jesus Christ is distinguished from all other passions. With respect to the validity and authenticity of this assertion, Barth insists that the *theologia crucifixionis* is *self-explanatory* since the crucifixion of Jesus is itself the wholly sufficient work and Word of God.<sup>78</sup>

But we ask, at this point, about the theological necessity of His crucifixion. For we cannot simply postulate the horrible crucifixion as the only alternative for our reconciliation. Barth is clear about this point, and he asserts that Scripture does not give a clear theological explanation on this question. With reference to Luke 24:26 'Christ should suffer these things,' Barth affirms that His death was necessary to overcome the obstacle of human sin, that is, 'rebellion'<sup>79</sup> of humankind against God. Sin is, in its character, the reason for human death. The atonement was to judge this death. Barth, in the light of Isaiah 53:5, portrays well his understanding of punishment and the necessity of His death by saying that 'My

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<sup>77</sup> (CD IV/1, 247). Hence 'powers' such as sin, evil, death, and fear are powerless. For Barth's view of this issue see (CD II/1, 590, 552; CD III/3, 289-368), in which Barth constantly articulates that evil has no ontology, and it can objectively be perceived only in the grace and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

<sup>78</sup> Human faith is an affirmation of this self-explanatory event and does not add anything to it. It calls for proclamation and explanation, not to augment the event, but to recollect it with joy and thankfulness. In this sense its very self-explanatory content demands an explanation: '*intellectus fidei*' (CD IV/1, 259-260).

<sup>79</sup> (CD IV/1, 253). Although the necessity of the crucifixion is ultimately the 'divine necessity' (CD IV/1, 10), Barth also finds the reason for the necessity of the crucifixion in terms of human sin: Matt 26:28; Lk 23:34; Jn 6:51; Ac 20:28; Rom 4:25, 5:9, 6:10f., 8:3; Gal 1:4; 1 Pet 3:18; Jn 1:29; cf. 1 Jn 3:5; Heb 2:14, 9:14, 28; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Jn 1:7; Tit 2:14; Rev 7:14; Eph 1:7, 2:16; Col 1:14, 2:13, 2:14f., 2:11; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:17, 5:14-15 (CD IV/1, 255-256).

turning from God is followed by God's annihilating turning from me. When it is resisted His love works itself out as death-dealing wrath.'<sup>80</sup> The decisive thing is not that He suffered instead of humankind, but that He has made an end<sup>81</sup> to us as sinners and therefore to sin itself. For this reason it is important to understand this passion as the 'radical divine action' (CD IV/1, 254) which destroys the root of evil in the world. Thus Barth says:

... this worst becomes an instrument in the hand of the merciful and omnipotent God for the creation of the best. For the sake of this best, the worst had to happen to sinful man: not out of any desire for vengeance and retribution on the part of God, but because of the radical nature of the divine love, which could 'satisfy' itself only in the outworking of its wrath against the man of sin, only by killing him, extinguishing him, removing him.<sup>82</sup>

God *had to* demonstrate His obedience, freedom, and death for human disobedience, enslavement, and life because human sin was *too serious* and *radical* to be dealt with lightly and because God *is* for us. The saving power of the radicalness of the crucifixion manifests in the fact that the human situation has objectively<sup>83</sup> changed even if human beings are unaware of it. So the real problem and therefore question is not the necessity but our capacity of understanding as the two events of the incarnation and the crucifixion are too great to be understood.

Thus far, the trend of Barth's discussion is centred mainly around the *explication* of the fact of the passion and crucifixion and its *meaning* for God and for all humankind. If Barth had ended his christology here, then it would most

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<sup>80</sup> (CD IV/1, 253). 'Meiner Abwendung von Gott folgt Gottes vernichtende Abwendung von mir. Seine Liebe wirkt sich da als todbringender Zorn aus, wo sie zurückgestoßen wird' (KD IV/1, 279).

<sup>81</sup> 'What took on the cross is the *last* word of an old history and the *first* word of a new' (CD IV/1, 176 ea). Barth rejects the *satisfaction theory* believing that it provides no clue to the scriptural witnesses. Also the *substitution theory*, that is that we are spared from suffering our punishment since Jesus suffered instead of us, is seen as an insufficient description of the meaning of the crucifixion (CD IV/1, 253).

<sup>82</sup> (CD IV/1, 254). 'Es mußte und sollte um dieses Besten willen dem sündigen Menschen eben dieses Schlimmste widerfahren - nicht aus irgend einer göttlichen Vergeltungs- und Rachsucht, sondern kraft der Radikalität der göttlichen Liebe, die sich selbst nur eben in der völligen Auswirkung ihres Zornes gegen den Menschen der Sünde, nur eben in seiner Tötung, Auslöschung und Beseitigung <<genug tun>> konnte' (KD IV/1, 280).

<sup>83</sup> The issue of objectivity will be dealt with in the discussion of the *noetic* event, the resurrection.



likely be a christology 'from above' and it would have been difficult finding any clues for the christology 'from below'. But the important thing is that Barth clearly points out the necessity of the crucifixion in such a way that *the passion was inevitable due to Christ's life-act*.

According to Barth, considering Jesus' (*Royal Man's*) relationship to God, His life-act and His proclamation of the kingdom, it is not really surprising that there could be the *No* of most radical rejection, a most categorical repudiation and a most resolute resistance on the part of the Jews. The Jews were not more wicked than the rest of humankind. In fact, they were much better than their heathen contemporaries. But the cause of passion was not a matter of disputable details, or a matter of developments and innovations which could be more or less accepted or rejected. It was not a matter of small revolutions but the one great revolution. Everything was at stake. It was a matter of life and death. *Neither people of that time nor of our age could accept Jesus' questions and challenges*. Thus it was inevitable that Jesus should be met by this typical repudiation and resistance on the part of Israel. Necessarily He had to suffer and be crucified.

Similarly, all the pride of Israel (Matt 23) was at stake when Jesus came up against it. Israelite's pride had to be either destroyed or defended at all cost. What Jesus could say was nothing but woe if He had to speak at all. What was at stake was humankind *against* God. Humankind's cause against God had to be defended in all circumstances and at all costs. However, as Jesus is the God Incarnate, Jesus fought this defense battle for human beings. So the rejection and attack on Jesus in His own home town (Lk 4:22f.) is only a prelude to this passion story (CD IV/2, 261-263; KD 289-291). In short, Jesus's passion and crucifixion was inevitable due to His *revolutionary life-act* 'from below' which brought such a *radical challenge* to all human systems, values, customs, and ideas.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> We will resume a more intensive discussion about this aspect of Christ's revolutionary life-act in chapter four.



## 2. The *Ontic* Event through the *Noetic* Event and the *Noetic* Event in the *Ontic* Event

We are not attempting here to discuss the whole issue of Barth's view on the resurrection of Jesus Christ for that would involve another thesis. Nor are we going to contrast or compare the crucifixion of Jesus Christ with the resurrection of Jesus Christ or *vice versa*. Our aim is to pick up one of the theological insights of the two events of the crucifixion and the resurrection for the purpose of our thesis.

### 1) The *No* for the sake of the *Yes*

We saw, on the one hand, that the central theme of Barth's whole christology is the *theologia crucifixionis*. It is the canon of all theology and as such christology. Thus in understanding the efficacy of the reconciliation, Barth especially stresses that the event of our reconciliation is completed in and through the crucifixion. '... nothing can be added by us in time or in eternity' (CD IV/1, 296) to the crucifixion in order to complete our reconciliation. For the crucifixion is an *ontic* event of our reconciliation. We also see, on the other hand, that 'the whole meaning of and character of the whole Christ-occurrence [is] attested by it [the resurrection]. ... the whole New Testament thinks and speaks on the light of this event, and to understand it [crucifixion] we must be prepared to think with it in the light of this event [resurrection]' (CD IV/1, 299). What does Barth mean? What is the value of the resurrection then?

According to Barth, the resurrection is the *noetic* event of the *ontic* event. By raising<sup>85</sup> the Son, the Father *approves* and *accepts* the Son's obedience to death.<sup>86</sup> The resurrection is the Father's 'validation,' 'justification,' and 'verdict'

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<sup>85</sup> Scripture witnesses the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the two different ways: 'God has raised Him from the dead' (Rom 10:9); and 'he [Jesus] has risen from the dead' (Jn 21:14).

<sup>86</sup> The resurrection 'crowns (*krönt*)' and 'reveals (*offenbart*)' the obedience (CD IV/1, 334; KD 368). 'It was a second act of justice after the first to the extent that it was the divine approval [*die göttlicher Validierung*] and acknowledgment [*die Anerkennung*] of the obedience given by Jesus Christ, the acceptance [*die Annahme*] of His sacrifice, the proclamation and bringing into force of

of the Son's act.<sup>87</sup> In this way the resurrection *announces* and *proclaims* the event of reconciliation which happened to the world in God Himself. The *ontic* event is *known* to the world that our reconciliation is achieved by the crucifixion. Since the resurrection has this noetic character the contemporaneity of the event of the reconciliation, with respect to the time and space difference, centres not upon human recollection or upon the Church tradition but upon the event of the resurrection. 'The eternal action of Jesus Christ grounded in His resurrection is itself the true and direct bridge from once to always, from Himself in His time to us in our time' (CD IV/1, 315). For He is the Lord of all time (Heb 13:8; CD IV/1, 314). So the resurrection is the answer to the question of the relevance and the efficacy of the event of reconciliation for humankind.<sup>88</sup>

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the consequences [*die Proklamation und das Inkrafttreten der Folge*], the saving consequences, of His action and passion in our place' (CD IV/1, 305; KD 337).

<sup>87</sup> 'die Validierung,' 'die Rechtfertigung,' and 'das Urteil' (CD IV/1, 313; KD 345).

<sup>88</sup> For the complexity of Barth's view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ see (CD III/2, 441-493; CD IV/1, 296-357; CD IV/2, 131-154; CD IV/3.1, 281-324; *The Resurrection of the Dead* [London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1933], pp. 15-223). Barth resumes his discussion on the noetic power of the resurrection under the heading *The Direction of the Son* (CD IV/2, 264-377) in order to discuss the relevance of the crucifixion, which is the ontic event of the reconciliation. In discussing this, Barth highlights the *holistic power* of *this Royal Man*, that is, that He not only *did* reconcile us but He also fully *makes* His deed *known* to us. What illuminates us, with regard to our thesis, is that such a holistic event is grounded, and took place, in *this Royal Man* who is the 'human proof' (CD IV/2, 290). In such a way, this *Royal Man* is the sole Integrator, or the concrete dual manifestation, of the 'from above' and the 'from below'. For a discussion of this Integrator, see chapter 4, II, 1.

In parenthesis, Barth spells out the direction of the Son in the following manner. The Son, the *Royal Man*, directs us three ways:

1) A definite place is fixed: we are His (*indicative*) and therefore are what we are (*imperative*). This is the 'law of the grace' (CD IV/2, 364). The power of the *Royal Man* in, and through, the work of the Holy Spirit brings humankind back to their own beginning, from which alone they live. It does not burden them with any other 'ought' than that of their liberating 'may' (CD IV/2, 365). Barth thinks that perhaps Ephesians 6:10 ('Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might') expresses the heart and totality of what has to be said from this first point of the direction of the Son (the *Royal Man*), and therefore of the work of the Holy Spirit, the ontology and the dynamic of what we have here called His incarnation (CD IV/2, 366-367). Additionally, the indicative and imperative are mentioned already in *Church Dogmatics* (IV/1, 317-322) in terms of human responsibility while Barth was discussing the resurrection.

2) The direction of the *Royal Man* in and through the work of the Holy Spirit involves *warning* and *correction*. We have already been freed from the bondage of sin. Yet we often behave, and even pretend, as if we are not freed yet. The work of the Spirit does not allow this pretext, by constantly reminding us who we are (CD IV/2, 367-372).

3) The direction of the *Royal Man* in and through the work of the Holy Spirit is a *definite*

To characterise the act of reconciliation, while incarnation and crucifixion are negative events, resurrection and exaltation are positive aspects of the event of reconciliation. The former which are 'from above' are *ontic* events and the latter which are 'from below' are *noetic* events. Barth sees these as two aspects of the *one* event. Here our argument comes. We saw that, apparently, Barth notes that the responsible Christian christology has to consider both aspects of the 'from above' and the 'from below' together. Nonetheless, we observe that Barth's christology is a christology 'from below', 'low' christology, rather than a 'from above', 'high' christology, as we give its *content critique* (*Sachkritik*), i.e., as we consider the meaning and the purpose of his christology. If Barth's christological direction and goal ends up with the movement 'from the above', i.e., with the crucifixion itself, then his christology should be a christology 'from above'. For Barth's christology begins with the divine movement 'from above' and then finishes with the crucifixion. The christology fully stops at this point of death. Barth's christology would be a one-sided divine act 'from above to below', from incarnation to crucifixion since there is no further thing to proclaim.

However, Barth's christology cannot be labelled simply as a christology

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*instruction which demands our most concrete obedience.* The Holy Spirit causes and summons us to test ourselves, our situation, our possibilities, and our choices. This is the task of theological ethics. But the Holy Spirit is more than a professor of theological ethics. His instruction is a concrete assignment which has an authority and stringency which cannot be compared with any other instruction. In the face of this instruction there can therefore be only the most concrete obedience. His instruction is the command of the living God which has to be heard directly and continuously by the community and the individual Christian. Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit cannot enslaved by humankind into any general law, subjected to any regulation, or pin-pointed in a written code. There can be a question of the objectivity or validity of the work of the Spirit and human responsibility. Yet Barth suggests abandoning this question because it has to do with the power and lordship of the living man Jesus who is the true Son of God. He [the Spirit of Jesus] always confronts us as this 'Other.' It is always a new, strange and superior work confronting human caprice: 'It is always the power and lordship of this One, the royal man' (CD IV/2, 373). 'As instruction the direction of the Holy Spirit says Yes and Forward at the very point where in its capacity as correction it says No and commands us to halt and retreat. ... It unmasks and rejects man's lack of freedom, but it also discloses and magnifies his freedom' (CD IV/2, 374).

It is worth noting that what Barth ultimately means when he talks about the work of the Holy Spirit as the authoritative and sovereign and definitive work, is nothing other than the work of the man Jesus of Nazareth, the *Royal Man*. For Barth such an emphasis on the *trinitarian hermeneutic* surmounts Rosato's claim that Barth's christology is not trinitarian and therefore lacks the equal and fair treatment of the Spirit as Lord.

‘from above’ because the *ontic* event, christology ‘from above to below’, is not an end in itself but points to the *noetic* event, the movement ‘from below to above’. The crucifixion is the ‘No of God.’ But it stands for the ‘Yes of man.’ For Jesus Christ is the ‘Yes of God’ spoken in the world and has become a ‘part of world history’ (CD IV/1, 257). Hence the importance is that *God has spoken the No not for the No but for the sake of Yes*: ‘God says No in order to say Yes. His Word is the Word of that teleologically established unity of the death and resurrection of Christ’ (CD IV/1, 347). The wrath of God is thus nothing other than the ‘fire of His love’ (CD IV/1, 94). The suffering and death of Jesus Christ is ‘only a negative form of the fullness of a positive divine righteousness’ (CD IV/1, 257) and a ‘negative event with a positive intention’ (CD IV/2, 310). The *No* of God, the divine act of the from above is not for itself but for the *Yes*, the from below. The ‘No of God is only the hard shell of the divine Yes’ (CD IV/1, 264). And this *Yes* is nothing but the resurrection which presupposes the *No*. The resurrection is then the answer to the prayer of Jesus ‘Abba! this cup will be removed as you wish.’ The resurrection is the ‘disclosure of its [life-act and crucifixion of Jesus] meaning’ (CD IV/1, 268). Indeed, *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the ‘revelation and meaning and purpose of the obedience demanded from and achieved by Jesus Christ.’*<sup>89</sup> The *noetic* event was necessary for two reasons. First, it took place lest we believe that death or sin is the last word. The resurrection is the final revelation of the fact that sin and death are ‘non-being.’<sup>90</sup> Second, God wanted to give His eternity in an ‘earthly form,’ ‘the inner and secret radiance of His glory an outward radiance in the sphere of creation and its history’ (CD IV/1, 308). But ultimately this necessity also corresponds to that of the necessity of the incarnation and the crucifixion, that is, the divine necessity which is the free

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<sup>89</sup> (CD IV/1, 312-313 ea). ‘Wir haben gesehen: die Auferweckung Jesu Christi von den Toten als eine zweite, andere, neue göttliche Tat war die Offenbarung des Sinns und der Absicht des von Jesus Christus verlangten und geleisteten Gehorsams und also seines Todes’ (KD IV/1, 345).

<sup>90</sup> (CD IV/1, 305; CD II/1, 590, 552; ‘das Nichtige (nothingness).’ Barth, in facing non-being, i.e., evil which causes sin, fear, and death, sees a dilemma that we can neither overestimate the power of evil nor underestimate it. However, evil has no ontology, and it can objectively be perceived only in grace and in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (CD III/3, 289-368).

activity of the love and the grace of God (CD IV/1, 309). The *noetic* event interprets the *ontic* event.

Nevertheless, many people tend to down play the importance of the *noetic* aspect of Barth's christology by singling out the divine self-revelation in humiliation. In this biased view many people are inclined to say that Barth's christology is a christology only 'from above'. Certainly this view is not a fair assessment at all when we turn to what he says: '*God says No in order to say Yes. ... The community lives by the fact that the first and the final Word of God is this Yes*' (CD IV/1, 347 ea). The crucified and the risen and the living Jesus Christ is God's *Yes* to humankind which includes God's *No* (CD IV/1, 349). But 'it is a mistake to hear the *No* independently, as the final word, with a validity which is absolute' (CD IV/1, 349). 'The *No* pronounced in the cross of Jesus Christ can and should be heard and accepted only as the necessary and in the true sense redemptive form of His *Yes*,' because death has no autonomous or definitive or absolute significance (CD IV/1, 350). The *Yes* is 'the purpose of the *No*' (CD IV/1, 350) because 'this second step [resurrection: *Yes*] is the goal of the first [crucifixion: *No*].'<sup>91</sup> In virtue of this purpose christology is an inclusive christology and not an exclusive christology. In other words, an appropriate and responsible christology aims at humankind, and as such deals with humankind; without this emphasis, christology is of no use (CD IV/1, 354-355). This is, as we mentioned before, the reason why Barth deals with christology not in a separate title 'christology', but in *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, it is not the act 'from above to below', from incarnation to crucifixion, which announces that the One who suffered for us is not destruction or death but life, it is the act 'from below to above', from resurrection to exaltation (CD IV/1, 347). It is not the crucifixion itself, but the Easter event which tells us what sin and death are. As such the resurrection is the 'axiom of all axioms' (CD IV/1, 346) in christology.

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<sup>91</sup> (CD IV/2, 356): '*... dieser zweite Schritt ja das Ziel schon des ersten ist*' (KD 398).

<sup>92</sup> This shows us how seriously Barth treats the humanity of Christ as well as all humankind. We will come to this point in the next chapter.



#### IV. Against the Implication of 'functional christology': Jesus Christ is Himself God the Reconciler

We are to remember the views of Charles T. Waldrop, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, and John Macquarrie. The unanimous assertion of these scholars is that the divinity in christology dominates in Barth's christology with the implication that the humanity in the christology had a merely functional role for the event of reconciliation. This implies that that particular Jesus of Nazareth is not God Himself. The view that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above' arises from the implication that Barth has a 'functional christology'. Verifying this issue of 'functional christology' is crucial not only for our thesis itself but also for an accurate understanding of the theology of Karl Barth, for his entire theology stands or falls according to how we understand his view of divine revelation.

##### 1. Jesus Christ as God Himself

According to Barth, christology must develop and present the doctrine of reconciliation in light of Jesus Christ alone 'as the beginning and the middle and the end' (CD IV/1, 125). The decisive thing about the incarnation is that its work and effect is not a mere restoration of the '*status quo ante*,' i.e., more than a '*restitutio ad integrum*' (CD IV/1, 13). The incarnation is 'the coming of salvation itself, the presence of the eschaton in all its fullness' (CD IV/1, 13). For the God of *Immanuel* is not merely playing a 'functional role' for the human reconciliation. This idea would simply mean that there is a God who 'controls' the humanity of Jesus Christ. Then Barth's christology would be nothing but a 'functional christology', i.e., in this case, Jesus would not be God the Reconciler Himself but might even someone merely employed for the task of reconciling work. On such a view, Barth's christology fall into the docetic heresy - an implication that would certainly have surprised Barth himself. On the question of 'functional christology', however, Barth makes his stance crystal clear in the preliminary statement of christology.

The man in whom God Himself intervenes for us, suffers and acts for us, closes gap between Himself and us as our representative, in our name and on our behalf,



this man is not merely the confirmation and guarantee of our salvation, but because *He [Jesus Christ] is God*<sup>93</sup> He is salvation, our salvation. He is not merely the redeemer of our being but as such *the giver and Himself the gift of its fulfilment and therefore the goal and end of the way of God*.<sup>94</sup>

To clear out any possible suspicion of him having a 'functional christology' Barth firmly declares that 'It [the name Jesus Christ] is not a name which has to be pronounced for the sake of completeness or adornment. It is there at the very heart of it as the central and decisive Word' (CD IV/1, 20). Jesus Christ is the *vere Deus vere homo*.<sup>95</sup> As He alone is the true God and the true human being, He alone is the true Reconciler between God and humankind. There is no true Reconciler behind or beyond this Jesus Christ. In the event of reconciliation 'He Himself is present as actuality, as His own witness. He Himself, by His Spirit, is its guarantor' (CD IV/1, 17). To this extent we understand the doctrine of reconciliation not as the doctrine of reconciliation *about* Jesus Christ but as the doctrine about reconciliation *of* Jesus Christ. This self-presence is the power of the doctrine of reconciliation and as such the source of our talking about the doctrine of reconciliation.

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<sup>93</sup> '... this one man [the Jesus of Nazareth] ... is the Son of God who is one with God the Father and is Himself God'; '*Nun ist ja dieser eine Mensch ... der Sohn Gottes, der mit Gott dem Vater eins und also selbst Gott ist*' (CD IV/1, 170; KD 185-186 ea).

<sup>94</sup> (CD IV/1, 13-14 ea). 'Jesus Christ is God, God as man, and therefore 'God with us' men, God in the work of reconciliation' (CD IV/1, 22).

<sup>95</sup> 'The mystery of Jesus, the Son of Man, that He is primarily the Son of God the Father, and as such Himself God, and then, and as such, also the Son of Man' (CD IV/2, 347); 'As God the Father and the Son is *one* God, the two acts are, in this sequence [humiliation and exaltation], the one incontestable living act of God, the act of the one free love which is His essence and work both inwards and outwards' (CD IV/2, 359 ea); 'It is God Himself in lowliness, temptation, suffering, rejection and death. It is God Himself as the Lord become Servant. But it is also God Himself in the exaltation and majesty of this one man. ... God does what this man does. Or rather, this man does what God does' (40-41); Jesus Christ is the 'total (*die ganze*)' and 'complete declaration of God (*die vollkommene Aussprache Gottes*)' (CD IV/3.1, 99; KD 110).

## 2. Jesus Christ the Epistemic Ground and not an Epistemic Principle

The name Jesus Christ is more than a mere 'epistemological principle' of the message of *Immanuel*. Otherwise,

... the Christian message will at once degenerate into the self-declaration of an ecclesiastical form of redemption instituted indeed by Him but now self-resting and self-motivated, or into a devotional and ethical system taught indeed by Him but self-justified and self-sufficient. ... And when this happens, the Christian message as such will no longer have anything individual or new or substantial to say to man (CD IV/1, 21).

The claim is that if we regard the name Jesus Christ only as an 'epistemological principle' then the name becomes a 'recitation of myth' (CD IV/1, 21). But the Christian message does not speak of myth but of the *concrete* name Jesus Christ.

We must realise that the Christian message does not at its heart express a concept or an idea, nor does it recount an anonymous history to be taken as truth ... . This means that all the concepts and ideas used in this report (God, man, world, eternity, time, even salvation, grace, transgression, atonement and any others) can derive their significance only from the bearer of this name and from His history, and not the reverse. ... They can serve only to describe this name - the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>96</sup>

Barth does not use the name Jesus Christ as a kind of means for his christological reflection. His standpoint is firm against any suspicion of promoting a 'functional christology', even if it is by implication. The Christian message does not know and proclaim Jesus Christ 'merely as the representative and exponent of something other' (CD IV/1, 21). To name Jesus Christ is not a 'mere courtesy,' nor is the name of Jesus Christ to be used as a 'symbol' or 'sign' which has a certain necessity on historical grounds, and a certain purpose on psychological and pedagogic grounds. When the Christian message employs the name of Jesus Christ it is not simply referring to a 'contingent fact of history' which is the 'vehicle' of an 'eternal truth of reason', but to the Reconciler Himself (CD IV/1, 21). 'He [Jesus Christ] is the authentic Revealer of God as Himself God. ... He is nothing

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<sup>96</sup> (CD IV/1, 16-17). The 'God with us' might be only 'a postulate, a pure speculation, a myth' without the name Jesus Christ: '*Ohne diesen Namen [Jesus Christus] ist es ungesichert, ungeschützt, jedem Verdacht, es möchte ein Postulat, eine freie Spekulation, ein Mythos sein, ohne weiteres ausgesetzt*' (KD IV/1, 16). Only this name Jesus Christ validates the actuality of a report of *Deus pro nobis* (*ibid.*, 17).

less or other than God Himself, but God as man.<sup>97</sup> To stress that Jesus Christ is the first and eternal will of God (CD IV/1, 51), and as such He is God Himself, Barth holds that

... since we are now concerned with the revelation and dealings of God, and particularly with the atonement, ... it is pointless, as it is impermissible, ... that we ascribe to this person another form than that which God Himself has given in willing to reveal Himself and to act outwards. If it is true that God became man, then in this we have to recognise and respect His eternal will and purpose and resolve ... behind which we do not have to reckon with any Son of God in Himself, ... with any other Word of God than that which was made flesh. ... He is the decision of God in time ... which was made from all eternity (CD IV/1, 52).

Barth does not stop here. '... if Jesus Christ is not the one Word of God from all eternity, ... how can we really ... not [take] it seriously as His eternal will, ... to which therefore we must hold?' (CD IV/1, 52). Jesus Christ is the 'full' and 'final' (CD IV/1, 65) revelation of the being of God since He is the 'God-man' (CD IV/1, 135). In reference to John 1:1 Barth raises a counter question: 'Can we interpret the "Son" here as the "Revealer"?' The definite answer is that the Son was God.<sup>98</sup>

Barth exposes his clear cut rejection of 'functional christology' in his awareness of the problematic nuances of the word 'obedience' when used of the Son and also in his consciousness of the danger of Modalism. On the one hand, the term 'obedience' might be taken to imply a subordinate status for Christ, and so Subordinationism. This would mean then the man Jesus of Nazareth is not the true God, but an inferior being behind whom a superior and true God stands. Here the true deity of Jesus Christ is jeopardised. On the other hand, Modalism tries to maintain the true deity of the humiliated Christ. But Modalism interprets the being

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<sup>97</sup> (CD IV/1, 128-129, cf. 130). Similarly, Jesus Christ is the 'content' and 'form' of the divine will and decree (CD IV/1, 50, cf. 51). For Barth's biblical reference to object 'functional christology' see (CD IV/1, 44, cf. CD 129).

<sup>98</sup> (CD IV/1, 71). 'In and through the being of man there immediately meets us at this point the being of God also. ... This cannot be said of any other creatures. ... Here in man, i.e., in *this man*, the vision and concept of the Creator are both direct and immediate in the creature. In the case of this creature there is no need to reflect about God. God is present and revealed as this creature is present and revealed' (CD III/2, 68 ea). Surely, there are words which testify that Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him, meaning that they are always one of two (Jn 10:38, 14:10, 20:17, 21:23). But this is the penultimate word. The ultimate word, with regard to the relationship between the Father and the Son, is that the Father and the Son are one (Jn 10:30, 17:11, 22). As such, that the Son is *ὁ κύριος* means that He is *ὁ θεός* (CD III/2, 63).

of this Christ as a mere mode of appearance or revelation of the one true Godhead (and that not His proper being), besides which there are the other modes of the ruling Father and also of the Holy Spirit. Here the true and proper being of Jesus Christ is impoverished. The problem is, as Barth asks, that if the Jesus of Nazareth is not the true God Himself 'what is the value of the true deity of Christ, what is its value for us?' (CD IV/1, 197). The two attempts resulted in separating the *immanence* of God from the *economy* of God. That is that the divine immanence, the being of God in Himself, differs from the economy, the being of God in revelation. In other words, the revealed God differs from the actual being of God. This would mean that Jesus Christ cannot be our Reconciler because He is not the real God. We will have to wait until the real Reconciler comes. So Barth affirms that Jesus Christ *is* the 'author' and 'finisher' (CD IV/1, 197) of reconciliation. Not only separating, but even distinguishing between, the divine immanence and the divine economy is repugnant to the ontology of Jesus Christ. For 'He is in time what He is in eternity ... . He is in our lowliness what He is in His majesty ... . He is as man, as the man who is obedient in humility, Jesus of Nazareth, what He is as God' (CD IV/1, 204). This is what *homoousios* means for Barth. Otherwise the work of salvation is distinguished from His proper being as worldly, and as such the work of salvation does not touch God Himself. God the Reconciler is 'identical'<sup>99</sup> (CD IV/1, 199 ea) with the humiliated man Jesus of Nazareth. Here the use of the term 'identical' conflicts with Robert Jenson's contention that the being of the man Jesus of Nazareth is at best 'identical' with God if He does such and such. What Jenson means is that Jesus Christ is not the true God Himself but 'very like' God. That is to say that Barth 'functionalised' christology for the purpose of the event of reconciliation. In fact Barth uses the term 'identical' often<sup>100</sup> to express the ontic being of Jesus Christ throughout the *Church*

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<sup>99</sup> Accepting that the Jesus of Nazareth had to be crucified, Barth points out that both Subordinationism and Marcionism suffered a loss of credibility as they tried to dodge His crucifixion (CD IV/1, 195-200).

<sup>100</sup> Eg. 'A Christ ... who was not identical with the Jesus of Nazareth ... would not be the Christ Jesus' (CD IV/1, 135); 'The Son of God who is identical with this man; *der mit diesem Menschen identisch ist*' (CD IV/1, 163; KD IV/1, 178, [1953]); 'but they are practically and in

*Dogmatics*. Yet this is by no means to say that the two different 'persons' is what Robert Jenson implies, but rather a matter of God's 'mode' of being and act.

Barth's stance in regard to this issue extends to his understanding of Christian hope. The ground of the Christian hope derived from the completion of reconciliation consists in the fact that Jesus Christ is Himself the pledge, the content of the pledge. Barth explains it in the following manner:

He [Jesus Christ] Himself as the eternally living God is also the eternally living man. The world is reconciled and converted to God in Him in the fact that He is this man, not merely in distinctness and antithesis in relation to God, but also in participation in His being and work, not merely in responsibility to Him, but with a responsibility for His cause, not merely as His servant and friend and child, but as a ruler in His kingdom (CD IV/1, 115).

The particular man Jesus of Nazareth gives us not only promises but is Himself the 'content'<sup>101</sup> of the promise. Barth continues to argue the point in such an emphatic way that

It is a terrible thing if at this point, at the last moment, we ignore Him [Jesus Christ] as though He were only a means or instrument or channel, and look to something different from Him, some general gift mediated by Him, regarding this as the object of Christian hope, the future posited for the world and man. ... If we look aside here, trying to understand the waited and expected being of man and all creation in the service of God only as the manifestation of a general idea of man or of being, we shall betray the fact that for our recalling and appealing to the name of Jesus Christ earlier - indeed from the very first in our discussion of the being of reconciled man - we have not really been thinking or answering in relation to Him, but have been developing an anthropological concept which we have found elsewhere and to which we have simply given a christological superscription (CD IV/1, 116).

Therefore Jesus Christ manifests the divine promise of the future of the being of humankind *not nominalistically but truly and actually*.<sup>102</sup> He is not only the *ontic*

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effect identical; *sondern die sich praktisch und faktisch gegenseitig decken*' (CD IV/1, 161; KD 176); 'this man [Jesus], is the one in whose identity with himself we must recognise at once the identity of God with Himself' (CD III/2, 68, 71); also (CD IV/2, 97, 98, 99, 100).

<sup>101</sup> (CD IV/1, 115-116). 'He does not merely go into lowliness, into the far country, to be Himself there, as He did in His turning to Israel. But now He Himself becomes lowly. He Himself is the man who is His Son. He [the Son of God] Himself has become a stranger in Him [the Son of Man]' (CD IV/1, 170).

<sup>102</sup> '... we have to take seriously the New Testament witness to the being of the one true God in Jesus Christ; *the realistic and not the nominalistic sense* [der realistische, nicht nominalistische Sinn]. ... everything depends on our accepting and following out in all its realism in the New Testament presupposition 'God was in Christ' [*Wieder hängt natürlich Alles daran, daß wir diese neutestamentliche Voraussetzung: <<Gott war in Christus>> verstehen, mitmachen, in ihrem*



but also the *noetic* revelation of the event of reconciliation. Barth reminds us of the view that 'We have already been on our guard against the possibility of regarding and treating the name of Jesus Christ in a purely "nominalistic" way, as a formal historical or symbolical sign of the event of atonement' (CD IV/1, 122-123).

Barth's emphasis upon the *totality* of His *being* and *work* confirms further our thesis. Separation of the person and the work of Jesus Christ is unacceptable. If the work of Jesus Christ is separated from His person, then we cannot be certain whether the work is truly His work or someone else's because the work could then be of a different person.<sup>103</sup> It would be impossible to believe in Jesus Christ as the true Lord and as such the true Reconciler. Jesus Christ is 'very God-man' and He is 'this One and not another. His being as this One is His history, and His history is this His being. This is the truth which must light up the doctrine of reconciliation as Christology' (CD IV/1, 128).

Jesus Christ is not a formal or a functional aspect of christology but is Himself the 'form' as well as the 'content'<sup>104</sup> of it. In this way He is the 'guarantor' of our reconciliation in the sense that He *mediates* the efficacy of the event. It also *speaks for itself*, in the sense that the work of reconciliation is not left to humankind alone as if its efficacy relied on its acceptance. On the contrary, the event constantly speaks for itself and as such completes its task.

Barth's refusal to treat the person and the work of Jesus Christ as merely instrumental and as such of 'functional christology', is clearly shown in his discussion of 'The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country' (CD IV/1, 160-210). According to Barth, the humanity of Jesus is 'not simply a better man, a more

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*Realismus nachvollziehen*]. If we grant this ... we have to follow the New Testament in understanding the presence and action of God in Jesus Christ as the most proper and direct and immediate presence of and action of the true God in the sphere of human world and world history' (CD IV/1, 198 ea; KD IV/1, 216-217).

<sup>103</sup> (CD IV/1, 127). Barth, with this view, keeps the danger of Arianism or Pelagianism in mind (CD IV/1, 128).

<sup>104</sup> While McIntyre, in understanding revelation, distinguishes content and form Claude Welch sees them together (John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966], pp. 154ff.; Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952], pp. 163ff.).



gifted, a more wise or noble or pious, in short a greater man,' but the 'qualitatively different' One. He is the 'Lord,' 'Lawgiver,' 'Judge,' 'a final Word,' 'the Saviour,' 'the Messiah.'<sup>105</sup>

That Jesus is God is not a *religious valuation (attribution)* attached to Him by humankind but a *recognition of Him as He was*. Barth rebuffs the view that sees Jesus Christ the Reconciler in terms of an 'attachment of religious valuation' to the man Jesus of Nazareth. '... the heavenly Father, His kingdom which has come on earth, and the person of Jesus of Nazareth are not quantities which can be placed side by side, or which cut across each other, or which can be opposed to each other, but they are practically and in effect identical' (CD IV/1, 160). The early Church community was confronted with the particular man Jesus of Nazareth 'on the presupposition of His majesty' (CD IV/1, 162). Calling the particular man Jesus of Nazareth God or Messiah 'has nothing to do with the free apotheosis of a man' (CD IV/1, 162). The peculiar place and function of the man Jesus of Nazareth was not a 'hypothesis' or a 'religious experiment' (CD IV/1, 162). Jesus Christ being God Himself and as such the true Reconciler Himself consists in the fact that 'They [New Testament Christians] do not try to crown Him in this way, but they recognise as the One who is already crowned, ... He Himself continually attests Himself as such' (CD IV/1, 162). The man Jesus of Nazareth reveals 'His unity with God.'<sup>106</sup> He is 'the King of His kingdom, and therefore "by nature God"' (CD IV/1, 163).

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<sup>105</sup> (CD IV/1, 160). Barth refers to the following passages to reject any view of functionalising christology: Col 2:9; Jn 5:23; Cor 1:2; Rom 10:12; Ac 9:14, 21; 22:16; Jn 20:28; Ac 7:59; 2 Cor 12:8; Jn 14:13f., (CD IV/1, 160).

<sup>106</sup> (CD IV/1, 163). 'The fact that He is this can be known only as He Himself reveals it, only by His Holy Spirit' (CD IV/1, 163). To this extent, 'His form as a man is regarded and described rather as the concealing of His true being, and therefore this true being as the Son or Word of God is a hidden being' (CD IV/1, 163).

### 3. *Anhypostasis* and *Enhypostasis* in view of Settling the Ontic Ground of Christology in terms of the Unity of the Two Natures

One of our arguments in this chapter was that Barth did not undermine the full humanity of Christ. Yet Barth deals with the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* controversy in which he states that the Son of Man exists only as the Son of God exists. Does this frustrate our thesis?

Traditionally, it would seem that the doctrine of *anhypostasis* is inimical to the 'from below' approach. It ascribes to Jesus a real humanity without regarding Him as a human being like us. It accepts the full humanity of Christ in body and soul. But the manhood stands only as the One to whom the divine Word united to it.<sup>107</sup> Christ's manhood is impersonal. Thus, for anhypostatic christology, the christology 'from below' is merely 'a degradation of the divine Person rather than exaltation of the human nature'.<sup>108</sup> The anhypostatic view sees christology basically as an ontological concern in which humanity is taken into divine experience. For the anhypostatic view, 'person' is not a psychological concept but essentially an ontological one.<sup>109</sup>

In contrast, the doctrine of *enhypostasis* is more compatible with the 'from below' approach. The divinity possesses humanity within itself. *Enhypostasis* means 'the incorporation ... of the human person *into* the 'person' (*hypostasis*) of God'.<sup>110</sup> Such language asserts that human life completely grounded in God is not any less a human life. It does not result in the loss of any aspect of being truly

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<sup>107</sup> E.L. Mascall, *The Theology and the Gospel of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1977), pp. 121-138, esp. 130.

<sup>108</sup> While christology 'from below' is closely related to the rejection of nature language, anhypostatic thought is neo-Thomist (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 7).

<sup>109</sup> Yet Baillie, who approaches christology 'from below', doubts any concept of impersonal humanity, because 'it is nonsense to say that he is 'man' unless we mean that He is a man' like us. Further, Baillie points out that depicting a full or real human being in ontological terms is bound to be docetic (Baillie, *God was in Christ* 87). Nobuhara also critiques this ontologically oriented christology with a view of *analogia actionis* (Tokiyuki Nobuhara, 'Analogia Actionis: A New Proposal for Christology "From Below"' in: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* [1986], pp. 269-285).

<sup>110</sup> 'The purpose of such a suggestion is to draw attention to the truth that people are created by God and that man in particular can become aware of God's indwelling' (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 7).

human. Such an idea lays a foundation for that possibility without the traditional tension between humanity and divinity. This indicates that to view 'from above' and 'from below' as so different from each other is not necessary. So the attraction of an enhypostatic approach is that it asserts the real humanity of Christ without excluding his divinity at the same time.<sup>111</sup>

Barth refers to the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* sporadically throughout his writings.<sup>112</sup> What is presupposed in these issues, even though their emphases differ from each other, is that both *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* stand due to the divine assumption (CD I/2, 163). Literally speaking, *anhypostasis* stands for *impersonalitas* of the humanity of christology. Jesus Christ exists as a human being because and as God makes human essence as His own. The human nature of Christ has no personhood of its own since it is prepared and actualised by God. The humanity of Christ is not an autonomous personal being, but exists directly in and with the one God in the mode of existence of His Logos. While *enhypostasis* stands for the *personalitas* of the humanity of Christ, this humanity has personhood or independent existence as a human being. But this human nature is real only in its union with Logos, in the person of God's Son.<sup>113</sup>

Pursuing an appropriate understanding, however, we need to know the content as well as the context of the issue lest we distort what Barth meant. Apart from *The Göttingen Dogmatik*, a first indirect statement of the issue emerges in section II, *God the Son of the Church Dogmatics* I/1 in which Barth acknowledges that the person of Jesus Christ is 'subordinate to the Creator' (CD I/1, 412).

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<sup>111</sup> According to Calvert, what is common to both theories is that they seek to assert the full humanity of Christ within the Chalcedonian framework and use the traditional language of classical christology (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 7-8).

<sup>112</sup> The *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* was used by Hippolytus and it emerged at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 to guard against the idea of a double existence of Christ as Logos and as Man, an idea inevitably bound to lead either to Docetism or to Ebionitism (CD I/2, 163). For Barth's understanding of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* see (CD I/1, 408-415; KD, 374-381, CD I/2, 149-150, 162-165; KD, 163-164, 177-80, CD II/1, 271, 284, 286; KD, 304, 319, 321, CD III/2, 55-71, esp. 69-70, CD IV/2, 49-50, 74 92-93; KD, 80; *Table Talk* 49; *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Vol 1, ed. H Reiffen, trans. G.W. Bromiley [Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991], pp. 90, 157, 163).

<sup>113</sup> CD IV/2, 49; *Göttingen Dogmatics* 157.

Between the Reconciler and the Creator 'the relation of subordination ... is present' (CD I/1, 413). This view seems simply to undermine the full humanity of Christ itself in terms of *enhypostasis-anhypostasis*. Yet we must know that this view is completed only with the conclusive remarks: 'But again this subordination and sequence cannot imply any distinction of being; it can only signify a distinction in the *mode of being*' (CD I/1, 413 ea).

The second arrangement of the issue appears in the subsection *Very God and Very Man* in section 15 of *The Mystery of Revelation* in the *Church Dogmatics* I/2 in which Barth brings up the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*, and where he faces the compatibility of the two natures of Jesus Christ, given the fact that 'His manhood is only the predicate of His Godhead' (CD I/2, 162). This presupposition seems to support the divinity in christology at the expense of the humanity, for the divinity is dominant over the humanity. Yet here too Barth does not plunge into this statement in order simply to underestimate the importance of the humanity of Christ. For we must not in any way forget the framework of Barth's Theological hermeneutics; Barth takes up the issue in light of a trinitarian perspective, i.e., of the *unity* of the two natures. That is why Barth mentions manhood as being the predicate of Godhood under the presupposition that '*This Man* Jesus Christ is identical with God because the Word became flesh in the sense just explained [that is that the humanity of Christ has an independent existence only in its unity with God]. Therefore He does not only live through God and with God. *He* [This Man Jesus Christ] *is Himself God*' (CD I/2, 162). Barth's articulation of the unity implies that the humanity in christology can never be down-played because the two are *one*.

The third treatment of the issue arises in the sub-section *Jesus, Man for God* under the bracket of *Man as the Creature of God* in the *Church Dogmatics* III/2. The issue is explained in the midst of his discussion about the human nature of Jesus Christ by way of six points. First, this human being, Jesus, is identical to God Himself. So to think about the humanity of Christ is impossible without thinking

of God too.<sup>114</sup> Second, the meaning and purpose of His presence and revelation in this human being is the deliverance of all humankind. God's presence in Christ means that the history of deliverance is enacted, and thus it may be known (CD III/2, 68-69). Third, God's distinction of this human being Jesus does not infringe upon His own sovereignty. He does not lose Himself in the human being of Jesus. His deliverance is always the act of His freedom and love. His deliverance is a demonstration of His 'transcendence,' His greatness and His deity, and as such confirms His being as the true Creator (CD III/2, 69). Fourth, since God is sovereign in His presence in this particular creature, its distinction means that it exists in the lordship of God. The humanity of Christ does not exist outside this act of sovereignty but within it. He is there just as God is there (CD III/2, 69). Fifth, the human being of Jesus is not neutral in the face of the divine action, in its relation to the history of the divine deliverance enacted in it, because it is distinguished by the fact that it lives within the lordship of God. Sixth, in sum, the distinctiveness of this man Jesus consists in the fact that He exists for God. That the humanity of Jesus exists for God means that it exists for divine deliverance and therefore for the freedom and love of God. It is the 'privilege of ... this man' (CD III/2, 71). In this way, the humanity of Jesus surpasses all other creatures.

Apparently, these six points seem to find Barth simply in favour of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* so that the humanity of Christ tends to be of secondary importance whilst His divinity is of prime importance. However, we should not misunderstand the point Barth makes. To deal with the issue of the humanity of Christ, Barth first of all affirms that the *humanum* of Jesus Christ exists *in the form of actual human being*. Under this affirmation, Barth questions

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<sup>114</sup> (CD III/2, 68). Here McCormack's view, in reference to Barth's statement that 'The Lord ... has to be present in this veil [*Verhüllung*] without restriction and diminution' from *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion: Prolegomena* 169, that the humanity is 'indirectly identical' with the divinity is highly questionable; as McCormack's interpretation is based solely on the early stage of Barth's theology. Probing into Barth's further development of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*, the prime concern is the unique *unity* of the two natures. Incidentally, McCormack's thesis is a good survey of the early theology of Barth. But the thesis is inadequate to convey a proper picture of Barth's christology since it lacks his later development of it (Bruce Lindley McCormack, *A Scholastic of a Higher Order* Parts 1, [Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, 1989], p. 318).



how the full truth of His humanity is qualified *in spite of the apparent contradiction* that He is distinct from us and yet He is also a real human being. Further Barth even questions whether this theologoumenon may not be superfluous. Keeping these two questions in mind, Barth develops his view as follows. God has not changed Himself in the human being Jesus Christ. The real divine sonship of the man Jesus is true in virtue of the *divine initiative* and act of humility which is intrinsically *impossible* (CD IV/2, 50). What does Barth mean? Is this simply to bolster *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*, betraying a christology 'from above' in terms of the domination of the divinity over the humanity?

To a certain extent, of course, Barth provides a clue to sustaining a christology 'from above' or 'high' christology by stressing *enhypostasis-anhypostasis* and particularly by *anhypostasis*. Barth's provision to such a clue is found at least on his two points: the humanity of christology is actualised by God, and God did not change Himself into a human being but remains God in spite of the fact that he truly became a human being. These two points seem to provide obvious evidence of Barth's having a christology 'from above', because overall God is prevalent.

At this juncture, we need to know the context of this argument for a proper understanding of the issue. Specifically, the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* is dealt with in the fourth of the six points (CD III/2, 69-70). Apparently, the purpose of the fourth point is to say that the humanity of Jesus Christ exists as God exists in Him. Yet, we must not bypass the other side of the emphasis that 'Man, this man is the imminent kingdom of God ...' (CD III/2, 70). Indeed, 'God is present and revealed *as this creature [human being] is present and revealed*' (CD III/2, 68 ea). Barth notes that the aim of God becoming a human being is to deliver humankind. But at the same time Barth points out that the humanity of Christ is not an object of deliverance lest, he undermine its saving significance at all. 'There can be no question of divine grace imparted to it [the humanity] in the sense that it needs it, *but only in the sense that it [the humanity] may itself be the active grace of God. It is not just the locus or sphere of this deliverance*' (CD III/2, 70 ea). To safeguard



the full humanity of Christ Barth continues:

Nor is this creature [the man Jesus] merely the instrument of the divine aid. The fact that through him God helps each and every man does not mean that He merely uses this creature for this end [the deliverance of all humankind]. No distinction can be made between what this creature is and what it does, between what God does through this creature and what He does in it. For this creature is in the Word of God (CD III/2, 70).

Further, the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* is discussed in the *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 where the main theme is the exaltation of the Son of Man. The issue is discussed in a detailed explication of the theme that 'this One, God, the Son, became and is also man' (CD IV/2, 44-50). The sum of this theme is this: God becoming a human being is entirely His own act. This 'becoming' is a 'once-for-all perfect' (CD IV/2, 46) event in time. Thus our speaking of Jesus Christ is an 'actuality' which is already behind us, and not a possibility which is ahead of us. The character of this divine act is a 'unity' in which there exists the 'becoming' and 'being' of God the Son in human nature. The unity exists because it is God who 'assumed' and 'adopted' human essence to Himself and sustains it, and not the other way around (CD IV/2, 46-47). So the report of John 1:14 is irreversible. What God assumed is a human being, 'a man.'<sup>115</sup> But He is 'the *humanum*' of all humankind, because God did not change Himself into a human being in order to remain as Reconciler, and because there is only One 'the Father's Son, by nature God' and not a strange dual existence of God and human being (CD IV/2, 49). With this, Barth reiterates the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*.

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<sup>115</sup> (CD IV/2, 47). Here Waldrop's view that Barth does not call the human nature which God assumed 'a man,' loses its cogency (Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology Its Basic Alexandrian Character* [Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984], pp. 58-59). For Barth, the terms 'human nature,' 'humanity,' or '*humanum*' mean the same thing: '... whether we speak of nature, or being, or essence, or kind, or simply of humanity, or like Jn. 1:14 of "flesh," the important thing is that we should keep in the background for the moment the idea and concept of 'a man' (<<ein Mensch>>). What became and is in the divine act of the incarnation is, of course, a man' even though He is 'opposed to all other men' as He is 'the *humanum* of all men' (CD IV/2, 47-48 ea; KD IV/2, 51-52).

Incidentally, the reason for Barth maintaining that Jesus is 'the' human being of all human beings in spite of His being the fully human like us consists in two facts: first, otherwise the Son of God surrendered Himself to this human being and is thus no longer is God and therefore no longer becomes our Reconciler; second, He did not exist as One, but in a duality, in which the Son of God exists alongside this individual human being, so that we will have to accept one of these absurd alternatives (*ibid*). It is also instructive to notice that in this statement, flesh being 'a man' is defined out just before the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* christology is raised (*ibid*).

Certainly, as we mentioned before, Barth deals with the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* under the presupposition that the terms are debated on the basis of divine incarnation. Nevertheless, what Barth wants to say overall does not simply to support the doctrine itself, but goes *beyond* the issue. According to Barth, the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* will constantly appear, firstly, as far as we remain in *unbelief* that God does surrender Himself to this human being although He truly became a human being like us. He is true God *and* true human being and yet He is not two beings but One being, however contradictory this might seem. Secondly, the issue arises because it is the great mystery, 'the Christian *sacramentum*' (CD IV/2, 50).

Observed from this angle, Barth's clarification of the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* is by no means intended to depreciate the full or autonomous humanity of Christ *per se*, in order to underscore a christology 'from above' or 'high' christology as such. Rather, it is meant to explain what the *true being*, the *true ontic ground* of Jesus Christ is. This is what Barth means when he says that the fact that He is a person, a soul, a body, and a temporal being does not make Him a real human being. 'It merely indicates His possibilities as man. He becomes and is real man, and is there as such as God is there in Him' (CD III/2, 69). Moreover it is important to realise that the issue is concerned with the fundamental question of christology: *what makes christology christology?* Working out the issue was motivated by what Barth perceives to be a theological necessity, that is, *to safeguard christology from becoming a general anthropology*. Barth asks 'what kind of a happening and being is this [Christ]?'. He then answers:

From the nature of the *acting Subject* our first lesson is that it is *God's own act*, the free disposing of the Creator over the creature, without cause or merit or co-operation on the part of the creature. *Mankind itself has not produced Jesus Christ as the realisation of the possibilities.* ... It was not itself the active subject in His becoming.<sup>116</sup>

In such a way, 'There can be no question of man himself being the ground of this

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<sup>116</sup> (CD IV/2, 45 ea). This statement has an implication for the rejection of Mariology: 'Even the *fiat mihi* of Mary is preceded by the resolve and promise of God. It is confirmed His work, but it did not add anything at all to it' (*ibid*).

unity [of humanity] with His own [divinity] as an autonomous principle alongside and in face of God' (CD IV/2, 46). Otherwise the human creature would occupy the place of God the Creator. This safeguard shows us how and where the real and fundamental issue lies beyond the question of whether Barth holds an *anhypostatic-enhypostatic* christology.

Barth's treatment of this issue has two main functions. *Firstly*, Barth means to say that it is *God* who creates the humanity assumed and not *vice versa*: 'He exists because the Son of God appropriated and actualised His special possibility as a Man' (CD I/2, 150).

Here, special attention must be given to John Macquarrie's point of view. Macquarrie, in reference to Barth's statement that '... his divine essence is that which is originally proper to him, and his human essence is only adopted by him and assumed to it ... the determination of his divine essence is *to* his human, and the determination of his human essence *from* his divine (CD IV/2, 70),' argues that Barth undermined the full humanity of Jesus Christ.<sup>117</sup> Macquarrie means by this that Barth has a christology 'from above'.

However, this accusation is very implausible. Barth notes that the Son of God who became the Son of Man is by no means two different beings, but *one* being: '... since the Son of God became this Man, *He is not another or second being in Jesus Christ alongside of the Son of God*' (CD I/2, 150 ea). What are we to say to this? If Barth professed the existence of two persons by positing the humanity alongside the divinity, then judging him as having a christology 'from above' on the basis of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* would have made sense. For the issue already presupposes two persons so that the chief question would be 'who depends upon whom?' And in fact, humanity's dependence upon divinity permeates the whole discussion in Barth's christology. But is this all? Again, does Barth not *go beyond* this scheme of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* by unequivocally stating that the Son of God and the Son of Man are *one* person? If the Son of Man *is*

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<sup>117</sup> Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 13-14.

nothing other than the Son of God, indeed, if the humanity actualised *is* the God Actualiser, what on earth is the use of this issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*? Does the issue stand simply to frustrate the proper humanity in christology and as such to advocate Barth's christology as a christology 'from above'? How would we interpret Barth's statement in respect of the Subject matter that '*God the Son* is the acting Subject in this event' (CD IV/2, 46 ea) and not simply 'God is the acting Subject in this event'?

The *second* function is to show us that the true locus and the role of the existence of all humankind is imaginable only in the light of the origin of the humanity of Christ: '... it is impossible to understand ourselves [directly] in this identity [with God]' (CD III/2, 71). These two purposes are well summed up in the following statements:

Deriving from God, man is in God, and therefore for God. ... Man is essentially from God and in God. When we say this we are speaking of the man Jesus. We cannot say quite the same thing of man generally and as such. But we cannot speak appropriately about man generally and as such until we learn that the essence of man as seen in Jesus, is to be for God (CD III/2, 71).

For these two reasons, that is, that the humanity of Christ is essentially from and in God, and, general anthropology is feasible only when it is seen in the light of the humanity of Christ, Barth discusses the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* under the subtitle *Jesus, Man for God* (CD III/2, 55-71). The reason for Barth speaking of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* is not to reduce an independence or autonomy of the humanity of Jesus Christ, but to demonstrate the origin as well as the purpose of all humankind with the help of the origin of the humanity of Christ. What Barth wants to do is *to differentiate clearly between God and humanity, the Reconciler and the reconciled*. If Barth did not clarify the fact that the origin of the humanity of Jesus Christ is not the humanity itself, but God, then he would have ended up by saying that the humanity itself and, as such, all humankind, could be and, as such, is God, and thus any human being could become the Reconciler. This would mean that any human could become the subject of christology. This is exactly what Barth wanted to avoid. And what he implies when he says that christology is not general anthropology and *vice versa*. The intention of the

discussion about *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* is to testify that the man Jesus of Nazareth is 'the reality of a divine act of Lordship' (CD I/2, 165). Barth thus states the *reason* for dealing with the issue of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* in the following manner:

It is in virtue of the eternal Word that Jesus Christ exists as a man of flesh and blood in our sphere, as a man like us, as an historical phenomenon. But it is only in virtue of the divine Word that He exists as such. *If He existed in a different way, how would He be revelation in the real sense in which revelation is intended in Holy Scripture?* Because of this positive aspect, it was well worth making the negation a dogma and giving it the very careful consideration which it received in early Christology (CD I/2, 165 ea).

In addition, it is illuminating that Barth underscores the cruciality of the humanity of Jesus Christ immediately after the sketch of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* (CD I/2, 165-171). This indicates that Barth never undermined the full humanity of Christ, as some allege.

Truly, seen from the aspect of divine prevalence, Barth uses many similar words to those cited by John Macquarrie which could be good evidence for his assertion that Barth has a christology 'from above': 'As the Word of God becomes flesh He assumes or *adopts* or incorporates human being into unity with His divine being, so that this human being, as it comes into being ...' (CD I/2, 160 ea) *etc.*

Nevertheless, the idea of 'adoption,' 'proper,' 'to,' and 'from' is not simply to uphold a christology 'from above' as Macquarrie insists. It is rather to show *how* the humanity of Jesus *becomes* and as such *is God* Himself. Our insistence proves to be even more convincing when we turn to Barth's discourse on *The Mystery of Revelation*. The humanity of Christ is dealt with from the perspective of his theological axiom that 'the Word became flesh'. The 'became' implies that the Word became 'participant' in human nature and existence. This means that the humanity of Christ does not exist on its own, but exists because the Son of God came into this particular human being. Thus this human being was never a reality by Himself. 'It is not (in the adoptionist sense) as if first of all there had been a man there, and then the Son of God had become that man' (CD I/2, 149). Otherwise divine incarnation would mean either that there are two persons or two subjects in the 'one' human being, or that any human being could have been the



Christ as we have already mentioned. So to clear up this issue and at the same time to maintain the full humanity of Christ Barth states:

Not two juxtaposed realities - a divine and then a human, or even less a human and then a divine - constitute the essence of man, this man, but *the one, divine reality*, in which as such the human is posited, contained and included. Man, *this man, is the imminent kingdom of God ...* Similarly, *the kingdom of God is utterly and unreservedly this man. ... This is the distinction which is His and His alone* (CD III/2, 69-70 ea).

Moreover, the idea of 'adoption,' 'from - to,' and 'proper' should be understood in the light of Barth's preference of the Word '*assumed*' flesh to the Word '*became*' flesh.<sup>118</sup> Again, the preference means that the intention of Barth's use of ideas like 'adoption' is to safeguard christology from three possible misunderstandings. *First*, God does not cease to be God in becoming a human being. This is a matter of the sovereignty of God. This particular human being Jesus of Nazareth is God Himself although He became a true human being like us. *Second*, the fact that God the Creator 'takes over' the human being of the creature 'into unity with Himself' seems absurd and inconceivable. Yet this absurdity and inconceivability did become actuality (CD I/2, 160-161). *Third*, viewed from the standpoint of trinitarian christology, the idea that Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and human being does not mean He is a third being or a midway point between the two, but rather that He is the 'God-Man, in such a way that He is God *and* Man. This 'and' is the inconceivable act of 'becoming' in the incarnation' (CD I/2, 161 ea). Therefore, the becoming of the Word cannot mean the 'origination' of the third between Word and flesh, but only the 'assumption' of the flesh by the Word.<sup>119</sup> In short, Barth's insight concerning *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* does not affect our thesis since the appropriation of the doctrine is intended to settle the ontic ground of christology in terms of 'the utter uniqueness of this unity of divine and human nature' (CD I/2, 163) rather than to support

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<sup>118</sup> '*annahm*' instead of '*war*' (CD I/2, 160 ea.; KD I/2, 175).

<sup>119</sup> (CD I/2, 161 ea). Barth notes that, whereas the Nestorian error was in its separation of the two natures, the Eutychian error was in its identification of the two natures (CD I/2, 161-162).



‘high’ or ‘low’ christology itself.<sup>120</sup>

## Summary

The method of approach or starting-point, as far as Barth’s christology is concerned, cannot be the definitive or final basis to judge Barth to be a ‘high-christologian’. The charge is an over-simplification of the issue, since what matters is not the method of approach or starting point, but its *referent*. Indeed, Barth’s emphasis upon the divine incarnation and his approaching christology from the Logos concept does not support a ‘high’ christology as such. Rather it is a matter of *theological* and therefore *christological* clarification. In other words, Barth begins his christology with the divine incarnation, the incarnation of the Logos, ‘from above’, to demonstrate the true content of christology even though its referent was the *Royal Man* Jesus of Nazareth. We must not at any rate forget that the overriding concern, not to mention his christology (CD IV/1-3), of the entire *Church Dogmatics* was the *Subject* matter: ‘who is the Subject of christology, and as such of the whole of theology?’ Barth, by revelation, does not mean an assumed deity or an ambiguous Logos concept, but the particular *human being* Jesus of Nazareth, the pivotal figure of all ‘low’ christology. The one who verifies the so-called ‘Logos’ or ‘incarnation’ or ‘revelation’ is none other than the particular human being Jesus of Nazareth. In short, Barth’s clarification of the Subject matter

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<sup>120</sup> There are two different observations on Barth’s reason for dealing with the doctrine. McCormack views that Barth deals with the issue in order to respond to the question ‘how can God fully be in history and in time without fully becoming identical with it?’ (McCormack, *Scholastic Order* 318-319, cf. 316-336). Whereas MacDonald holds that ‘Barth’s motivation is no less than to preserve the *sui generis* theological realm from non-theology.’ So ‘... it is a misconception to think of Barth’s appropriation of the *enhypostasis-anhypostasis* along the dimension high/low Christology’ (Neil Beaton MacDonald, *Karl Barth and the Metatheological Dilemma. Barth, Wittgenstein and the Metadilemmas of the Enlightenment* [Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Ph.D. Thesis, 1994], pp. 112, 111).

McCormack’s observation is only partly correct, for it misses the rest of the motivations which we mentioned on our third points in page 59 (cf. 62). We should add that the problem with MacDonald’s view is found in its obscurity as to how the theological realm could be preserved from a non-theological realm in terms of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*. See (*ibid*).

of christology is done in prospect of its *verification*. Having recognised this, evaluating Barth's christology as a 'high' christology on the basis of the method of approach alone is very much open to debate. Methodology cannot and should not be postulation for its own sake but should be a 'means.' The fact that Barth begins his christology with the divine incarnation, 'from above', is to be understood in terms of the need for clarification of *who* Jesus Christ was and *how* a genuine christology is related to this 'who'. The christological movement 'from below', *i.e.*, 'low' christology, also governs Barth's understanding, and therefore his presentation of the movement 'from above', *i.e.*, 'high' christology. The concern of Barth's christology is not the method of approach but its *agenda* and *interest*.

The term *Immanuel* is, for Barth, a more than adequate phrase to describe the divine act of incarnation. This 'God with us' is thoroughly christological. The primacy of *Immanuel* is God. Yet this divine primacy does not relegate humankind from being the central interest and aim, but rather highlights it in the strongest and securest manner. The surety and actuality of our reconciliation with God cannot be based upon ever capricious humankind but upon the ever faithful God. An equivalent expression for *Immanuel* is *Deus pro nobis*. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are the visible and undeniable actualisation of *Deus pro nobis*. God does not become for humankind but *is* for it, in that God is by nature for humankind. This implies, for the purpose of our thesis, that the christological movement 'from above', 'high' christology, means nothing but a further emphasis of the movement 'from below', 'low' christology. This implication, analogically speaking, is intensified by the fact that the *No* which represents the negative movement 'from above to below' took place for the sake of the *Yes* which is constituted by the positive movement 'from below to above'. This insight is further reflected by Barth's preference for referring to the christological topic not as 'christology', but as *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* which signifies christologically the importance of the humanity of Jesus Christ, and consequently of all humankind.

The epistemic ground and the content of this knowledge of *Immanuel* is nothing other than the man Jesus of Nazareth. This means that the name Jesus Christ, in describing the event of revelation, is used in a real way and not in a

nominal way. This belies the view that Barth's christology is a 'functional christology'. For Barth, the term '*identisch*' (identical) means 'is': the man Jesus of Nazareth is the revelation of God Himself. In this way, Jesus Christ is the very content of our reconciliation and thus the 'guarantor' of our reconciliation.

Barth's appropriation of the doctrine of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* tends not to support a 'high' christology or a christology 'from above', so to speak. Barth refers to the older doctrinal formula in order to settle the issue of the *unique unity* (*einzigartig Einheit*) in the sense of its union (*Vereinigung*) of the two natures, in spite of the fact that what constitutes christology is not human beings but God. As such, the emphasis of the issue lies not on the domination of God but on the unity of God and man. So Barth's safeguard to stop christology from being appropriated as general anthropology is feasible in virtue of this unity, despite the fact that the particular Jesus Christ was a true human being (*ein Mensch*).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Standing the *Royal Man* in the Centre of Barth's Christology

#### I. Beyond the Scheme of 'Bothness': both 'from above' and 'from below'

Seeing Barth's christology from a wide spectrum, John Thompson's view is perfectly correct when he describes Barth's christology not as one solely 'from above' but as both 'from above' and 'from below'. Indeed, based on this scheme of both 'from above' and 'from below', his christology consists in the sovereignty of divine grace in Christ, and in the establishment in Christ of Man as the righteous partner of God. So it is no surprise when we encounter his christology in the framework of reconciliatory exchange, ἀποκαταλλάσσειν, of the *exinanitio* of God and the *exaltatio* of humanity.

It was God who went into the far country, and it is man who returns home. Both took place in the one Jesus Christ. It is not, therefore, a matter of two different and successive actions, but of a single action in which each of the two elements is related to the other and can be known and understood only in this relationship: the going out of God only as it aims at the coming in of man; the coming in of man only as the reach and outworking of the going out of God; and the whole in its original and proper form as the being and history of the one Jesus Christ (CD IV/2, 21 ea).

Having underlined this framework of exchange Barth even declares that 'It [christology] is primarily and properly this human Subject, who, as the object of the free and liberating grace of God, cannot be only an object in the event of atonement, but also becomes an active Subject.'<sup>1</sup> Here we must therefore question why Barth emphasises this 'bothness' despite his uncompromising standpoint that

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<sup>1</sup> (CD IV/2, 19). Indeed, 'The New Testament obviously speaks of Jesus Christ in both these way: ... from above downwards, the other from below upwards. It would be idle to try to conclude which of the two is the more original, authentic and important. Both are necessary' (CD IV/2, 135). Similarly, 'It is true enough that the event of atonement is wholly and utterly a movement from above to below. But it is also true that this truth encloses the further truth that the atonement is wholly and utterly a movement from below to above, the movement of reconciled man to God' (CD IV/2, 6; cf. 4); 'It would be a strange Christology which did not give the same attention to the true humanity of Christ as to His true deity, or, ... to His royal office as to His high-priestly office, to the exaltation of the Son of Man' (CD IV/2, 19). Significantly enough, again, Jesus Christ being both the electing God and the elected human being corresponds exactly to the current emphasis that the Son of Man is not only a mere 'object' of christology, but also the 'Subject' of christology. Incidentally, the English edition conveys Barth's meaning well by rendering the term Subject with capital S in contrast to the small o for the term object. This is because Barth, by the term '*Subjekt*' and '*Objekt*,' underlines the humanity as being the true agent of christology rather than being a kind of 'puppet' or simply a 'follower' of the divinity (KD IV/2, 19).

the Subject of christology is divine movement 'from above', from without human possibility or reality, and not 'from below', from within human possibility or reality? What does this mean for our present concern?

### 1. The 'from above' in the 'from below'; Realising the Envisionment of the 'from below' in the 'from above'

Barth deals with the christology 'from below' in terms of the life-act of the *königliche Mensch*, the *Royal Man*. The phrase expresses both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> What triggers our mind is that whereas the aspect of 'above' (CD IV/1) is built up with the content of 'below', divinity in terms of humanity, the aspect of 'below' (CD IV/2) is set up with the content of 'above', humanity in terms of divinity. Admittedly this chiasmic development is a demonstration of the indispensability of the twofold<sup>3</sup> 'from above' and 'from below'. In fact this indispensability undergirds the *unio hypostatica* which resulted in the term 'God the Son (*Gott der Sohn*)' (CD IV/2, 48; KD 53). This framework of bothness alerts us to make two observations. On the one hand, it is a sheer error to insist that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above'. Indeed, the framework of Barth's christology that responsible christology consists in the exchange of both 'from above' and 'from below' diametrically opposes this view of 'high' christology. On the other hand, this framework apparently endorses John Thompson's view that Barth's christology is a christology both 'from above' and 'from below'. Certainly Barth affirms this bothness by referring to the concept of 'exchange'. Barth vindicates Thompson's view:

If we could speak of the reconciling God and reconciled man only by looking upwards and downwards from Jesus Christ, and constantly looking back to Him,

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<sup>2</sup> The man Jesus is the *Royal Man* because He is not merely a human being, but 'the' human being (CD IV/2, 180).

<sup>3</sup> Theologically speaking, this is the application of his trinitarian scheme. Christologically speaking, this is the realisation of *vere Deus et vere homo*. Soteriologically speaking, this is the actualization of the 'exchange' of divine humiliation and human exaltation. Eschatologically speaking, this is the basis of the responsible Christian life (CD IV/3,2; Barth, *The Christian Life*).

we can speak of Jesus Christ only as we consistently keep before us the one whole event of the covenant between God and man fulfilled by Him, and therefore of both the above and the below (CD IV/1, 123).

However, we cannot avoid the question of the *ground* for these two movements of one event, since it is so important for a correct understanding of Barth's christology. On what *basis* does Barth speak of this event, and what is its content? Concerning this question, it is crucial to turn to Barth's declaration that if we are to understand the meaning of the incarnation, the 'from above to below', we have to understand the cry of Jesus on the cross: '... the meaning of the incarnation is plainly revealed in the question of Jesus on the cross: "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"'<sup>4</sup> What does this mean with regard to our question of the christological ground? Knowing the context of the argument and reflecting upon the *content* of his whole christology this statement suggests two points.

*Firstly*, God came and was *real flesh*. Flesh in the language of Scripture means that humankind is sinful and therefore stands under the 'divine verdict' and 'judgment' (CD IV/1, 165). The flesh is 'the concrete form of human nature and the being of man ... as unreconciled with God and therefore *lost*' (CD IV/1, 165). The humility of the Son of God and the corresponding majesty of the Son of Man coincide as they are represented in the events of Gethsemane and Golgotha (CD IV/2, 292). 'The only thing is that we must not measure Him by a preconception of what is divine' (CD IV/2, 95). Indeed, according to Barth, our conventional understanding of true God is completely shattered by this event of the crucifixion of God Himself. If we have to summarise what Barth means by true Theology and as such true christology we may say that *only the true God could let Him be crucified*:

Everything depends on our accepting this presupposition [that God is crucified in Jesus Christ], on our seeing and understanding what the New Testament witnesses

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<sup>4</sup> 'Was Inkarnation bedeutet, wird offenbar in der Frage Jesu am Kreuz: "Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen" (Mr 15:34)' (CD IV/1, 185; KD 202 [1953]). For Moltmann this cry is 'special divine [God's] pain' which is God's experience of 'hell' (Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* 136).



obviously saw and understood, the proper being of the one true God in Jesus Christ the crucified. ... Therefore we must determine to seek and find the key to the whole difficult and heavily freighted concept of the 'divine nature' at the point where it appears to be quite impossible ... the fact that Jesus Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is from this point, and this point alone, that the concept is legitimately possible.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, we remember that for Barth the crucifixion is *the ontic* event of christology to the extent that the work of reconciliation is completed in the crucifixion itself.<sup>6</sup> Thus reconciliation does not require any complementary event,

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<sup>5</sup> (CD IV/1, 199). Subordinationism and Modalism suffered from the evasion of this crucifixion of Jesus Christ (*ibid.*). 'He [God] differentiates Himself from all false gods (among whom the god of Islam is especially characteristic in this respect) by the fact that He is not a prisoner of His own exalted status, but can also be lowly - not in the surrender but the affirmation of His divine majesty' (CD IV/2, 42).

<sup>6</sup> 'His work, His being and action [and crucifixion, and therefore reconciliation], were *not augmented* by His resurrection. ... His work [reconciliation] was finished' (CD IV/3.1, 282); 'It [reconciliation] is a completed fact [in and through the crucifixion], to which *nothing can be added* ... [or] taken away by us in time and in space' (CD IV/1, 296 ea; cf. IV/1, 245, 290). So 'The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ are the revelation which corresponds to this completion of his work' (CD IV/2, 141).

Moltmann's difficulty with this view of Barth is that if Christ's resurrection has not given 'added value' to the crucifixion 'Christ's resurrection is then reduced to "the Father's judgment" and becomes the legitimation category for the cross of the Reconciler.' 'If the whole salvation of the world has 'already been accomplished' in Christ's death on the cross, as Barth mentioned, then the New Testament's futurist assertions about salvation are meaningless' (Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* 318). Barth's view of the resurrection of Jesus lacks its futuristic dimension, *i.e.*, 'the eschatological orientation of the christian faith' by categorising Christ's eternity (the parousia of Christ) to the three modes of time: past-present-future (*ibid.*, 318). Paul does not speak about an end of history that has already taken place. He speaks about 'an End-time process' which the resurrection of the crucified One has set in motion (*ibid.*, 319). Resurrection does not say '*restitutio in integrum* through reconciliation,' but through the new creation (Rev 21:4) (*ibid.*, 188-189). Consequently, Barth's christology is too much influenced by the *theologia crucifixionis* whereby the centrality of the *theologia resurrectionis* is decentralised. Moltmann's critique is agreeable on the basis of his reference to Barth's statement so far.

Yet it is equally true that Moltmann overlooked Barth's constant articulation of the centrality, precisely speaking the 'unity,' of the resurrection with the crucifixion (CD IV/2, 282). At the same time, Barth notes that the Easter event did not take place 'after' the crucifixion but 'on' the crucifixion. This Easter event is the 'new' act of God and not an addendum to the crucifixion: 'His resurrection did not follow from His death, but sovereignly on His death' (CD IV/1, 304 ea). In parenthesis, such a critique is caused partly by Barth's dialectic style of contention throughout his theology. For instance, although Barth emphatically emphasises that the resurrection did not augment anything to the crucifixion, he also says that 'Thus the resurrection and ascension *add* to what He was and is and to what took place in Him-they *add* to what was to be seen in Him' (CD IV/2, 133 ea).

Rahner also notes the equal magnitude of the resurrection with the crucifixion in a similar way to Barth: 'The resurrection of Christ is not another event *after* his passion and death ... the resurrection is the manifestation of what happened in the death of Christ' (Karl Rahner, 'Dogmatic

even the resurrection. Barth's description below shows how important and therefore central the event of the crucifixion is for him in spite of his full recognition of the importance of the resurrection.

The word 'cross' is a description of the whole existence and divine likeness and activity of the man Jesus. Yet it is the cross which 'controls (*beherrscht*)' and 'penetrates (*durchdringt*)' and 'determines (*bestimmt*)' this whole divine likeness and activity of the man Jesus (CD IV/2, 249; KD 276). 'The cross is the sign under which it [divine likeness] must be seen both as a whole and detail' (CD IV/2, 248). As the Gospels put it, the *Royal Man* was not welcomed but rejected and then suffered and was crucified. The Gospels did not expunge the story of the passion and crucifixion from the story of Jesus. On the contrary, the Gospels stated that His death is 'a problem of the first magnitude. It is, in fact, the problem which epitomises all problems of His existence and relationship to God and His life's work' (CD IV/2, 251). Nevertheless the Gospels integrated the story of the passion with the *Royal Man*'s life-act that went before.<sup>7</sup> They gave the crucifixion a particular emphasis as the necessary result of the life-act that went before. 'In the whole of the New Testament He is the Crucified, enclosing in Himself the whole of His being within this limit [that post-Easter Jesus is absolutely identical with pre-Easter]. Faith in Him is faith in the Crucified. Love for Him is love for the Crucified. Hope in Him is hope in the Crucified' (CD IV/2, 250; KD 277). All the positive things of Jesus is characterised by and based on this final negative event. 'We have not seen the Jesus of Gospels and the whole of the New Testament properly if we do not finally take account of the fact that the light in which we have tried to see Him is *the light of His death* as it shine forth in His resurrection, and that it is in this way that it is the light of His life, the light of the world' (CD

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Questions on Easter' in: *Theological Investigations* IV [London: Darton & Longmann, 1966], p. 128).

<sup>7</sup> Barth's understanding of the crucifixion in such a way that the crucifixion was the result or consequence of Christ's life-act, the way He lived, clearly reveals where Barth's christological hermeneutic anchors. For the cruciality of the question of *how* He lived see *The Life Act of the Royal Man as the Hermeneutical Filter for Barth's Christology* in chapter 5.

IV/2, 250 ea).

Barth has constantly reminded us of the fact that the purpose of the incarnation is the reconciliation of all humankind. This purpose is achieved in and through the crucifixion. This means that the event of crucifixion was *the kairos*, *the very decisive moment*, in which our reconciliation not only happened but was also completed. Because if the God who was crucified on the cross is the God who alone has the exclusive authority for our reconciliation, then no other reconciliatory events or signs can be more perfect and more decisive than that of the death of God Himself. Moreover, all the christological movements, whether 'from above' or 'from below', point to this very moment. That is to say, 'What we have called the way of the Son of God into a far country and the homecoming of the Son of Man, and what older dogmatics called the *exinanitio* and *exaltatio* of Jesus Christ, are one and the same event *at the cross*' (CD IV/2, 292 ea). This is why Klappert disagrees with Pannenberg's understanding of Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' in view of having an Logos-flesh christology. According to Klappert, Barth's christology consists in the *unity* of the incarnation and the exaltation. So the importance of God coming into the 'far country' for Barth is not to interpret it as the history of the 'coming down' and the 'going up' in which the 'coming down' predominates. Rather, as for Barth, the importance of this movement lies in the location of the crucifixion because it is the content and the revelation of both movements. By this Klappert means that for Barth, crucifixion is the basis for his christology: '*das Kreuz ist, weil das Integral der Geschichte Jesu Christi, der Ort der Offenbarung der Gottheit Jesu.*' Hence Klappert argues that Barth's christology cannot be a christology 'from above', but rather a christology 'from below'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> (B. Klappert, 'Die Christologie K. Barths als Anfrage an die Christologie der Gegenwart' in: *Freispruch und Freiheit* [1973], p. 256). For the same reason, Klappert goes beyond R. Bultmann's view of the crucifixion. For Bultmann, the importance of the crucifixion is that 'it happened,' but he does not show any historical interest nor give credibility to the consideration of the historical setting of the crucifixion. Klappert points out that we must ask, as Barth did, 'What happened?'. It is not sufficient to say that there 'was' a salvific event, crucifixion. The crucifixion is the salvific event because it is the event of *Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth*. As such, Barth's christology is a christology 'from below' in a strict sense (*ibid.*, 245-262).

Assuming that Barth's christology is represented without bias, this view of the *kairotic moment* attracts our special attention. By the term 'kairotic moment' we emphasise more the dynamism of the act itself rather than the *Gestalt* of the event. The term is more about the content itself rather than its ground which upholds the content. So we now ask on what ground did this ontic event take place? Further, how could we *know* that 'God was in Jesus Christ' or 'God was crucified'?<sup>9</sup> Indeed Barth's whole christology begins with the divine incarnation. But *what kind* of incarnation does Barth speak of? Does Barth not mean by the Son of God who went to the 'far country' specifically *this Royal Man*, the particular Jesus of Nazareth? This particular Jesus is the 'origin,' 'content,' and 'norm' of the divine direction (CD IV/2, 3). According to Barth, the humanity of Christ is an 'objective fact' which gives christology its 'ontological reference' (CD I/2, 165). That is to say, 'Every question concerning the Word which is directed away from Jesus of Nazareth, the human being of Christ, is necessarily and wholly directed away from Himself, the Word, and therefore from God Himself, because the Word, and therefore God Himself, does not exist for us apart from the human being of Christ' (CD I/2, 166). The event of human salvation took place 'in the concrete event of this visitation ... *in the man Jesus*' (CD IV/1, 192 ea). Acknowledging this significance, Barth states that:

'Jesus Christ for us' means *as this one true man* Jesus Christ has taken the place of us men, of many, in all the authority and omnipotence and competence of the one true God, in order to act in our name and therefore validly and effectively for us in all matters of reconciliation with God and therefore of our redemption and salvation, representing us without any co-operation on our part (CD IV/1, 230 ea).

For Barth, the *theologia crucifixionis* and the *theologia resurrectionis* are the two underpinnings of christology. So the whole discussion of the first volume of his christology (CD IV/1) focuses upon the *theologia crucifixionis*, the divine movement 'from above to below'. Yet, significantly enough, the *humanity* of Christ is eminent even within the discussion of the *divine* crucifixion. In other words, the

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<sup>9</sup> This question of knowability was dealt with in chapter 3. For Barth's overall discussion about this issue see the doctrine of God (CD II/1-2).

divinity of Christ is revealed in its humanity. In this view Barth underscores the necessary element of the 'abasement' and the 'jeopardising of every man' in the course of explicating the divine crucifixion.<sup>10</sup> This paradoxical emphasis upon the importance of the humanity of Christ is highlighted as Barth maintains that:

It is not merely a matter of some harmless idea of God, the comfortable transcendence which we can know and which makes us exalt ourselves all the more consciously. No it is a matter of *the concrete form of a fellow-man* occupying that place which we all think it our sacred right to occupy. Abasement by an abstract 'god' is a safe enough matter which we can turn to our own glory. But abasement by God *in the flesh*, in the person of *this fellow-man*, is a dangerous matter. It is a real and concrete abasement. If *this man* is my divine Judge, I myself cannot be judge any longer. ... In the history of *this man* it came to pass that I was relegated from the sphere in which I wished to judge and placed in the sphere in which I can only see and hear and learn what the judgment really is by which I have to judge myself. And that means that I am jeopardised (CD IV/1, 233 ea).

Indeed, it is this humanity of Christ who becomes and thus is *the* ontic ground of the ontic event, the crucifixion. Hence, apart from this humanity of Christ the power of the crucifixion would become utterly senseless and the efficacy of the event would be utterly irrelevant no matter how great the crucifixion would be. Further, the fact that Barth *first of all* addresses the significance of the humanity of Christ in his discussion of the crucifixion is instructive (CD IV/1, 232-273). To note the humanity of Christ as the ontic ground of the crucifixion Barth thus states:

He did not take the place of this man merely as God but as *man*: 'to fulfil all righteousness,' to do right at the very place where man had done wrong, and in that way to make peace with man, to the triumph of His faithfulness, to His own magnifying in creation and by the creature. The Word became *flesh* that there might be the judgment of sin in the flesh and the resurrection of the flesh (CD IV/1, 237).

We saw that for Barth the crucifixion is the 'aim' of the whole divine movement 'from above'. As such the crucifixion is the centre of his christology. God had to don flesh for this crucifixion. At this juncture, Barth emphatically reminds us of the fact that:

we are dealing with an act which took place *on earth, in time and space*, and which is indissolubly linked with the name of a certain man. The history of

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<sup>10</sup> (CD IV/1, 232-233). By doing this God ends the 'greatness' and the dream of 'divine likeness' of humankind. Therefore humankind must see another human being at the very place where it finds its own 'glory' and 'grandeur'.



religious and cultic speculation knows of other suffering and dying gods, and the similarity with these pictures forces itself upon our attention. But the Gospel does not speak of a passion ... in a heavenly or some purely imaginary space and time. They indicate a very definite point in world history which cannot be exchanged for any other. They point to its *earthly theatre*. They do not speak of a passing moment in the occurrence of a myth which is cyclic and timeless and therefore of all times. They speak of a unique occurrence for which there is no precedent and which cannot be repeated (CD IV/1, 245 ea).

As for Barth, it is very important to note that the passion of Jesus Christ is from the very first the act of God, the divine act 'from above', as we have noted throughout the discussion. But when we see the train of argument, the act of God is not simply to advocate his christology as a christology 'from above' as such. On the contrary, the articulation of the passion of Jesus Christ as being the divine act is to highlight the fact that human sin is done away with not only on a phenomenological or a resultant level which resolves only committed sin, but on the fundamental and drastic level, i.e., *the annihilation of the sin itself* of the σάρξ assumed as *sinful* flesh, as involving what we might call *originale peccatum* (CD IV/1, 253-256).

Barth does not explicate the two critical phrases like *Deus pro nobis* or *Immanuel* from a vague theological or christological axiom. As he clearly notes, 'From the very first we have not thought of His being abstractly, but *per definitionem* as belonging to us and us to it [Him]. Again, from the very first we have thought of His activity *per definitionem* as His activity for us, *pro nobis*' (CD IV/1, 284). The terms are the disclosure or recognition of that which 'is' (CD IV/1, 249) as it appears to humankind. And the same is true of Christian faith and proclamation. All these derive from the concrete facticity and truth of the crucifixion. So Barth articulates: 'We cannot be content to define the passion of Jesus Christ as the act of God for us, however true that may be, but we must go on to define the act of God for us as the passion of Jesus Christ. In this, and this alone, is the act of God for us. With this there stands or falls the truth of Christian experience' (CD IV/1, 249). The crucifixion took place nowhere but *in* that particular Jesus of Nazareth. What does this say for our thesis?

Barth's christology, with respect to its responsibility and its tangibility, leads

nowhere but to this ground, this 'from below'. There is even no point of speaking about his christology apart from this ground. For we recognise 'the divine in the human' (CD IV/2, 96), the 'from above' in the 'from below'. Incidentally, Barth even believes that our understanding of sin and the justification of humankind can be developed only in the light of this christological basis.<sup>11</sup> Yet this basis is not something which relies on an ambiguously claimed divinity but on 'the anthropological sphere. For it is in this sphere that the atonement made in Jesus Christ has taken place.'<sup>12</sup> Christology 'from above' was possible and actual *only on this anthropological basis*, the christology 'from below': 'If Jesus Christ is not also true man, how can the true God have condescended to us in Him? How does He really take our place as the Son in the power of God? How does He do for us what only God can do for us in our place?' (CD IV/2, 25). Only the humanity of Christ 'demonstrate[s] and confirm[s] the true deity of God' (CD IV/1, 259). Because 'God Himself speaks when this man speaks in human speech. God Himself acts and suffers when this man acts and suffers as a man. God Himself triumphs when this One triumphs as a man' (CD IV/2, 51). So Barth points out that 'it [the older Reformed Christology] did not have the same emphatic interest in *the presence of the divinity in the humanity of Jesus Christ*.'<sup>13</sup> Undoubtedly, christology is about the act of God, the act 'from above to below' as Barth constantly emphasised.

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<sup>11</sup> Sin is 'pride (*Hochmut*)' (CD IV/1, 358-478; KD 395-531) in contrast to the obedience (*Gehorsam*), and humiliation (*Erniedrigung*) of the Son of God (CD IV/1, 157-210; KD 171-311), 'sloth (*Trägheit*)' (CD IV/2, 378-483; KD 423-546) in contrast to the diligent witness of the Son of Man to His exaltation and as such our exaltation into the fellowship with God (CD IV/2, 20-377, esp. 264-377; KD 20-422, esp. 293-422), and 'Falsehood, liar (*Lüge, Fälscher*)' (CD IV/3, 368-461; KD 425-531) in contrast to the Son of Man being the true Witness, and as such the Guarantor of our reconciliation with God (CD IV/3, 165-367; KD 188-424). For an eye-view of Barth's whole christology see Jüngel's diagram (Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth, a Theological Legacy* [Philadelphia & Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1986], pp. 48-49).

<sup>12</sup> 'Eben in ihm [in anthropologischen Bereich!] hat sich ja die in Jesus Christus geschehene Versöhnung ereignet' (CD IV/1, 283; KD 312).

<sup>13</sup> (CD IV/2, 68 ea; KD 73): '[in] der Praesenz ... der Gottheit in der Menschheit Jesu Christi.' Barth's constant reminiscence of the rejection of Docetism may also undergird our view in connection with the presence of the divinity in the humanity. God was truly incarnated 'from above'. But where to? It is only in this Jesus of Nazareth, 'from below to above', that God and His movement 'from above' is undeniably revealed.

'But,' Barth says, '... The Son of God ... becomes and is Jesus of Nazareth ... . We have, therefore, to say quite unreservedly that Jesus ... is ... God by nature' (CD IV/2, 71). The act of divine reconciliation fulfilled nothing except in and through the human being Jesus Christ: '[I] had no desire to seek ... the reconciliation of the world with God, elsewhere but *in the humanity* assumed by God, and therefore *in the man Jesus of Nazareth*' (CD IV/2, 68-69 ea).

Here we need to remember the scheme of Barth's christology as we are concerned with the centrality of the humanity in christology as the ontic ground of christology. Barth's christological axiom is that christology itself is useless unless it has to do with humankind. This axiom is well reflected in the summary of Barth's christology that God exalted human essence into Himself as He assumed human flesh. This event of assumption and exaltation took place nowhere but in Jesus of Nazareth: 'It is the history in which God Himself became and was and is and will be very man *in ... Jesus of Nazareth*' (CD IV/2, 69 ea). Therefore Barth adequately announces that 'The fact that the man Jesus is the whole basis and power and guarantee of our exaltation means that there can be *no place* for any other in this function, not even for the mother of Jesus' (CD IV/2, ix-x ea). Indeed, 'Everything [christology] moves towards this cross. And everything [whole life-act of Jesus] took place in this crucifixion - the whole reconciliation, the whole restoration of peace, between man and God' (CD IV/2, 290). In this way the passion and crucifixion of the Son of God constitutes the climax of the christology 'from above', and the early Church community (in the light of the resurrection!) found this crucifixion to be the 'coronation' of His Kingship and 'the victor of death.'

However, this definitive 'form' of the 'from above' (not to mention the 'from below') was the '*human proof*' (CD IV/2, 290 ea) of the *Royal Man*. It was this new covenant - our reconciliation through His crucifixion - which is formed *in this human proof* of the *Royal Man*, that the early Church community actually proclaimed. It was '*He* [the *Royal Man* who] inaugurated His kingdom as a historical reality' (CD IV/2, 291 ea). Undoubtedly Barth's whole christology and

as such whole theology focuses upon this crucifixion which is the climax of the christological movement 'from above'. Yet what Barth at the same time reminds us is that such a central event took place nowhere but in the *human* form, in the *Royal Man*. Truly *the only ontic ground* for such a central event of the crucifixion is this '*human proof*,' this *Royal Man*. Only for this concrete placement, 'from below', do we know, and can we say, that there was a christology 'from above'. This means that the *humanity* of Christ is the *very ground of the realisation* of divinity. Hence 'we must be content to recognise what is divine ... at the very point where it is human history ... in the way of Jesus of Nazareth. ... It [That the Word assumed flesh] brings us to the beginning of a way on which we have to accompany this history, recognising the divine *in the human*' (CD IV/2, 95 ea; cf. IV/2, 296). Truly Barth's christology will stand or fall depending on whether we accept this implication, because, 'He is not God to us, nor can He be known or glorified or loved or worshipped by us as God, except in ... the human flesh' (CD IV/2, 101). Barth even goes on to say that 'Without this [humanity] ... even the true God would be to us as a hidden God, and therefore in practice no God at all' (CD IV/2, 101). Insofar as this very ground of realisation is correctly evaluated Barth's christology could possibly be more than its ostensible scheme of 'both' 'from above' and 'from below'. In this precise sense it is likely to be more appropriate to view Barth's christology rather as a christology 'from below'.

Concerning the question of how we are to understand the event of the incarnation, Barth lays the greatest emphasis on the act of the divine majesty. The meaning, basis, and power of the incarnation, the temporal (human) being, is the act of divine majesty. The event of the incarnation is not a realisation of one of the possibilities immanent in the created cosmos, but the concrete actuality in the cosmos. But it is an 'absolutely new event,' a 'new act of God,' because in this event '*God*' becomes '*man*', the '*Creator*' '*creature!*' without ceasing to be God the Creator (CD IV/2, 37).

But how do we know this event as a unique event and how do we interpret it? According to Barth, we acknowledge this unique event only as God allows us

to know it since His act of majesty alone is the '*ratio essendi*' and '*ratio cognoscendi*' (CD IV/2, 37). This typical argument could be good evidence for those who see Barth's christology as a christology 'from above', because all things are worked out within the Godhead and actualised by God Himself 'from above', not from the human possibility and reality. However, Barth does not intend here to support such concepts as a 'high' christology. Instead, his intention is to clarify his fundamental premise that christology matters because it is the very act of God Himself. For the purpose of our thesis we ask further, what kind of divine act of majesty does Barth speak of? Barth's own statement provides a clearer, more authentic answer and to this we refer for our own verdict:

It [human recognition] will not think that it can master this object, ... but will find itself mastered by it [object, the divine act of majesty]. ... The presupposition of this knowledge of the man Jesus is the participation of the knowing subject in the new thing which makes this One this man within the cosmos. And the presupposition of this participation is that the ground of being of this One penetrates and transcends of itself the limits of the sphere of what we can see and interpret and know ... . But this means that ... the man Jesus speaks for Himself, expounds Himself and gives Himself to be known, so that He is ... known and recognised as the One He is (CD IV/2, 39 ea).

The 'self-repetition' and 'self-reflection' of the divine act of sovereignty is this human being Jesus (CD IV/2, 39). This knowledge is 'the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ, the true *man*' (CD IV/2, 41 ea). To this extent the event of incarnation is the event of 'His own self-exposition' (CD IV/2, 39).

Further we may argue that Barth's christology is overall a christology 'from above' because his constant emphasis lies upon *God* who became a human being not only under the theme of the christology 'from above' (CD IV/1), the humiliation of the Son of God, but also under the theme of the christology 'from below' (CD IV/2), the exaltation of the Son of Man. That the Creator became a creature is the great Christian 'mystery' and 'sacrament' (CD IV/2, 40). Reconciled man originated from the human being Jesus Christ because God became a human being *without ceasing to be God*. If God changed Himself into a human being there would be no majesty, power, or mercy in this action. 'Everything depends upon the fact that in the doing of this work He [God] is always the One He [God] is' (CD



IV/2, 40). In fact Barth's supreme emphasis in considering the nature of the incarnation is that it is not humanity which adopted divinity but divinity which assumed humanity. Hence God and not humanity is the active subject *per se* (CD IV/2, 45-47). As far as its character is concerned, the divine act 'from above' is the 'only ground' of this being and becoming: 'Flesh became and is the Word only to the extent that the Word became and is flesh. The exaltation ... is always grounded in God's humiliation. ... Hence ... It [the Christology from below] takes place because and as the latter [the Christology 'from above'] takes place' (CD IV/2, 47). Similarly, 'His [Jesus Christ's] divine essence ... causes ... the existence of the man Jesus of Nazareth. ... Hence it is "from above to below," and only then ... "from below to above"' (CD IV/2, 62-63, par. 71).

Nevertheless, we must not misunderstand this contention as standing simply for a christology 'from above', because Barth speaks of this christological ground only with reference to 'His [Jesus Christ] self-revelation and self-exposition as the true man' (CD IV/2, 40). This suggests that we cannot think of this 'high' christology without this 'low' christology. The prime aim of this argument is to articulate that God does not change Himself into a human being. Concurrently, the revealed God does not live in a dual existence of God and of human being, and nor is He some strange third being who is neither divine nor human (CD IV/2, 49, 63). Were this to happen God would cease to be the Reconciler.<sup>14</sup> According to Barth, deifying the humanity of Christ is not necessary for two reasons. Firstly, if the human essence of Christ is deified, He cannot really be the Mediator between God and humanity, as He would not have a legitimate (proper) point of contact with

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<sup>14</sup> (CD IV/2, 63). Following the Reformed tradition the two natures are a matter of *modes* of one being, the *unio hypostatica*, and not the unity of the two natures (CD IV/2, 63-66). In expressing the hypostatic union of the two natures Barth employs the concept of 'God the Son (*Gott der Sohn*)' (CD IV/2, 48, 50; KD IV/2, 53), 'the divine humanity (*die Gottmenschheit*)' (CD IV/2, 52, 57; KD 56, 61). In addition, for Barth, this hypostatic union has an implication of the indispensable relationship of God with humankind, and as such of Christ with His Church. This is the result of viewing the issue from the perspective of the *totus Christus*. But this indispensability based on the *totus Christus* is by no means to reverse or mix the predicate (humankind or Church) with the Subject (God). This *totus Christus* is the reminder that the hypostatic union is to be known in its *uniqueness* compared with all other unions (CD IV/2, 60).

human race (CD IV/2, 89). The second reason is that He is 'also and primarily the Son of God' (CD IV/2, 94). Further, deifying the humanity of Christ was impossible for Him as the Son of Man (CD IV/2, 153).

Consequently the idea of union consists 'with its presupposition of the genuine distinctiveness of divine and human essence, and therefore the rejection of the thought of any identification or identity of the two' (CD IV/2, 63). Incidentally, this rejection of any identification of the two is not to be confused with Barth's argument that Jesus Christ is God. What Barth talks about here is the *nature* (*Natur*) or essence (*Wesen*) of divinity and humanity itself. As far as the natures are concerned, human is human and divine is divine because 'each of the two natures ... has its own determination' (CD IV/2, 70) and 'Each has its own role' (CD IV/71). Jesus Christ as God has these two natures *without altering one unique nature (essence) into the other*. This is what Barth means when he says that 'The Son of God is the acting Subject who takes the initiative in this event, and not either His divine or His human essence.'<sup>15</sup>

Our standpoint that Barth commenced his christology with the history of divine incarnation on account of the clarification of the ontology of christology turns out to be even more cogent when we inspect the content and meaning of 'revelation' in Barth. Throughout *Church Dogmatics*, the revealed God is the sovereign, free, and loving God. This definition provides the basis for the first part of his christology (CD IV/1). Specifically, the characteristic attributes of the revealed God are underlined in the discussion about the possibility and necessity of incarnation. Our previous recognition of Barth's unveiling christology in terms of the doctrine of reconciliation instead of a separate 'christology' implies that responsible christology cannot be dealt with on its own but only in relation to humanity (CD IV/1, 124), first of all with the humanity of Jesus Christ and then with all humankind. This identity of interlocked christology between God and humanity corresponds to Barth's later view which highlights the *togetherness* of

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<sup>15</sup> (CD IV/2, 70). Barth refers this view of the union of the two essence to the Chalcedonian definition; ἀσυγχύτως: *inconfuse* and ἀτρέπτως: *immutabiliter* (CD IV/2, 63).

God and humanity in *The Humanity of God*. The event of reconciliation took place 'not only *to* the world but also *in* the world' (CD IV/1, 198 ea). To paraphrase that, it would mean that the 'to', 'from above', is seen and made tangible through the 'in', 'from below'.

It is worth noting that Barth, in his letter to Gerrit Cornelius Berkouwer on the 30th of December 1954, prefers his theology to be referred to as *The Freedom of Jesus Christ* rather than *The Triumph of Grace*. Having thoroughly read the book which appeared in 1954, Barth answers Berkouwer's critique thus:

'I'm a bit startled at the title, *The Triumph* ... Of course I used to use the word and still do. But it makes the whole thing seem so finished, which it isn't for me. *The Freedom* ... would have been better. And then instead of ... *Grace* I would much have preferred ... *Jesus Christ*. My intention, at any rate, has been that all my systematic theology should be as exact a development as possible of the significance of this 'name' (in the biblical sense of the term) and to that extent should be the telling of a story which develops through individual events' - the story of struggle, but a victorious one.<sup>16</sup>

Admittedly the term grace is an abstract noun whereas Jesus is a proper name which points to a specific human being. Analogically speaking, the divine movement 'from above' could be categorised as abstract reality since the concept and the reality of the 'from above' signifies something which is beyond human sight and experience, whereas the concept and reality of the 'from below' represents something which is tangible in human sight and life. This implies, for our thesis, that the 'abstract' or 'ambiguous' movement 'from above' becomes concrete reality through the movement 'from below'. The former needs to be seen only from the latter perspective as long as Barth replaces the abstract entitlement by the concrete name.

The second purpose of the argument is to reject the *Mariology* of the Roman Catholic Church as we read the preface of Barth himself that 'The content of this book might well be regarded as an attempted Evangelical answer to the Marian dogma of Romanism - both old and new' (CD IV/2, ix). 'Even the *fiat mihi* of Mary is preceded by the resolve and promise of God. It confirmed His work, but

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<sup>16</sup> Busch, *Karl Barth* 381.

it did not add anything at all to it' (CD IV/2, 45). The truth of the hypostatic union lies in the fact that the divine essence is 'originally proper' to Him and His humanity is 'only adopted' by Him (CD IV/2, 70) since 'Mankind itself has not produced Jesus Christ as the realisation of one of its possibilities' (CD IV/2, 45) but it is God who assumed flesh. Hence the *assumptio carnis* is a matter of divine 'determination (*Bestimmung*)' and not of 'alteration (*Veränderung*)' (CD IV/2, 84; KD 92). This means that whereas the humiliation of the Son of God means a humanisation of His divine essence, the exaltation of the Son of Man does not mean a divinisation of His human essence (CD IV/2, 71).

We need to recall Barth's preliminary remark on the danger of the element of christology 'from below' with respect to our present issue. Barth asks whether a line of thought 'from below to above' does not espouse the way of 'theological humanism, moralism, psychologism, synergism, and ultimately an anthropocentric monism' (CD IV/2, 8). He also reminds us of the following dangers and problems: 1) immanentist theology of the pious man over the last two centuries including the Reformation theology itself which failed to think first of all from God to man; 2) existential theology (theology by existentialism) which denied the primacy of God over human being, so that the gracious condescension of God to human being is made quite impossible; 3) the human being reconciled with God and by God has often become a human being reconciling itself with itself, the religious human being, self-complacent and self-explained; 4) and Roman Catholicism still entices us as the classical compendium of all these errors. In short, 'the *theologia crucis*, in which the true *theologia gloriae* has its roots, may easily be destroyed by a false *theologia gloriae*' (CD IV/2, 8-9). Barth notes that he could possibly take Christian mysticism, Pietism, Reformed Enlightenment, or Schleiermacher as an example for a possible destruction of the *theologia crucifixionis* by a *theologia gloriae*. Yet Barth takes up the example of monasticism as a danger in dealing with the exaltation of man (CD IV/2, 11-20). No human beings or their works deserve to be called a 'saint' or to be 'canonised' by another human being. They should remain a human being no matter how holy and righteous they may be. No human

being deserves to be divinised, since it has rather been exalted to 'fellowship' with God. 'The problem of reconciled man, like that of the reconciling God ... has its roots in the identity of the Son of God with the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth' (CD IV/2, 19). Does this preliminary remark not make the issue clear enough?

In line with these two precise dangers Barth further rejects the *communicatio idiomatum* (CD IV/2, 73-83) in favour of the *communicatio gratiarum* (CD IV/2, 84-104). The reason for his rejection is this. The term *communicatio* is supposed to mean the human nature's full possession and use of the full glory of the divine when the human nature needs the divine nature. Thus the *communicatio* is supposed to mean the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of the humanity of Jesus Christ. This interpretation may mislead us to think of the two natures in terms of 'unity (*Einheit*)' rather than 'union (*Vereinigung*).'<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the phrase *communicatio idiomatum* divinises humanity by way of its implication.

This misunderstanding in viewing union in terms of unity could imply the inversion of 'above' and 'below', earth and heaven, finite and infinite, and God and human being. Moreover, the *communicatio idiomatum* either mixes the two natures to the extent that the human is deified, or separates the two natures to the extent that this deification isolates the two natures from its dynamic history by describing it only statically in and for itself. The consequence of the deification of the humanity of Christ is even more serious as we recognise that if the humanity of Christ is divinised, then all humankind can also be divinised. This would imply that we do not need a Reconciler. After all, christology would become an 'imitative general anthropology' (CD IV/2, 82) in which christology would have, for the most part, only an exemplary function in consolidation of mystic anthropology.<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> (CD IV/2, 73-83). This *communicatio idiomatum* resulted in Hegel, L. Feuerbach, and Biedermann identifying the divine essence (nature) with the human essence (nature) which led them to having an Alexandrian christology (*ibid.*, 83). The 'union (*Vereinigung* KD 67)' of divine and human essence has taken place in Jesus Christ from the divinity's 'unity (*Einheit* KD 67)' with the humanity. Also, Barth uses the term 'unity' basically to designate the two movements, and the term 'union' for the two natures.

<sup>18</sup> Barth perceives that this inversion is wittingly or unwittingly the root of German idealism which was actualised in Hegel, Feuerbach, and Schleiermacher (*ibid.*).



issue is *not about the divinity of humanity, but the humanity of divinity*, 'the humanity of God.'<sup>19</sup> Naturally, the mutual determination of the two essences stand in this distinction: 'His divine essence is *to* His human,' and 'His human essence *from* His divine.'<sup>20</sup> The human essence is set in a 'perfect fellowship'<sup>21</sup> with the divine essence through 'mutual participation.'<sup>22</sup>

Here we again encounter John Macquarrie's contention. In reference to 'the divine is originally proper to Him' and 'the human is only adopted by Him' Macquarrie argues that Barth underrated the full humanity in christology. In such a way Barth has, according to Macquarrie, a christology 'from above' even though he talks of *The Humanity of God*. Macquarrie even expects the divinity of humanity, implying the divinisation of human essence in criticising Barth's christology. But having noticed the reason for such expressions, the credibility of Macquarrie's critique is highly questionable.

Barth's phrase of 'originally proper (*ursprünglich eigene*)' and 'adopted (*angenommene*)' in the statements quoted, by no means 'undermine' the full humanity of Christ at the expense of His divinity as Macquarrie asserts and some others imply. Needless to say, this emphasis is a matter of clarifying the whole Subject of christology. But to resolve this assertion we will turn to the statement of Barth himself. According to Barth, God did not exist as a human being from all eternity. On the contrary, God existed as a human being because it is God who

<sup>19</sup> 'die Humanität Gottes' (CD IV/2, 72; KD 78).

<sup>20</sup> (CD IV/2, 70; KD 76): 'Indem sein göttliches Wesen das ihm ursprünglich eigene, sein menschliches aber das von ihm angenommene' and 'es handelt sich um die Bestimmung seines göttlichen Wesens zu seinem menschlichen hin und es handelt sich um die Bestimmung seines menschlichen Wesens von seinem göttlichen her.' Here we notice that whereas the original text does not overtly emphasise the terms 'von' and 'zu,' the English translation renders the terms with explicit emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> 'die vollkommenste Gemeinschaft' (CD IV/2, 72; KD 78). The resurrection and ascension are the first, particular, and temporary revelation of this fellowship (CD IV/2, 100).

<sup>22</sup> (CD IV/2, 72). Barth discusses the 'mutual participation' in the three terms: 'impartation' (CD IV/2, 73-84; 'die Mitteilung' KD 79-91) of the two essences which corresponds to the Lutheran doctrine the *communicatio idiomatum*; 'election' (CD IV/2, 84-104; 'die Erwählung' KD 91-115) which corresponds to the *communicatio gratiarum*; and 'common actualisation' (CD IV/2, 104-116; 'die gemeinsame Verwirklichung' KD 115-129) of the two essences which corresponds to the *communicatio operationum*.

assumed flesh. God 'adapted' and 'empowered' (CD IV/2, 98) the humanity of Christ for the service of mediation and the attestation of *divine potestas* and *potentia* and not human. God does not have to deify the humanity of Christ. The humanity of Christ is the 'form (*Gestalt*),' 'organ (*Organ*),' 'clothes (*Kleid*),' and 'temple (*Tempel*)'<sup>23</sup> of this divine assumption of grace. In such a way the humanity of Christ remains truly human like us and is not deified. Macquarrie's insistence that Barth undermined the full humanity of Christ might be legitimate had Barth said that God divinised the humanity of Christ through the exaltation of humanity. For the reality or the identity of pure humanity would then no longer exist, since the divinisation of humanity means the dissolution of humanity. But Macquarrie's view is highly questionable as Barth constantly affirms the pure humanity of Christ throughout the discussion of christology. Strictly speaking, therefore, the humanity and, as such, the life of Jesus Christ is a 'history' or 'event' and not an 'appropriated state' (CD IV/2, 99).

In describing the 'common actualisation' of the third element of the divine exaltation of humanity into fellowship with Godhead, Barth reinterprets the traditional concepts of *unio*, *communio*, and *communicatio*. The 'common actualisation' means, *firstly*, that Jesus Christ does not exist only 'in conjunction with' but also 'in the strictest relationship' (CD IV/2, 115) of the one with the other: 'The divine expresses and reveals itself wholly in the sphere of the human, and the human serves and attests the divine' (CD IV/2, 115). *Secondly*, the two essences always actualise themselves 'as the one and the other' (CD IV/2, 115). This common actualisation which the older dogmatics called the *communicatio operationum* (CD IV/2, 104-116) notes that from the very first Barth has understood the doctrine of the incarnation as an '*operatio*' between God and

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<sup>23</sup> (CD IV/2, 101; KD 111). In this particular respect, McIntyre observes Barth's christology has a Nestorian overtone (John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* [SCM Press, 1966], p. 160), whereas Pittenger shares Barth's rationale by arguing that Jesus was the genuine historical figure who lived a concrete human life with all its limitations, 'yet with all its possibility of serving as the the organon ... or fully personal human instrument for God' (Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* 44).

mankind, fulfilled in Jesus Christ as a union of God with humanity (CD IV/2, 105). This *operatio* implies that the reality of Jesus Christ is identical with this event of *operatio, communicatio operationum*. What this involves is as follows.

In delineating the person of Christ, Barth keeps company with the older dogmatic concepts of *unio, communio, and communicatio*, or with the traditional doctrine of the two states. The terms *unio, communio, and communicatio* speak of actions, events, and *operationes*. However, Barth re-interprets the view of phenomenology in terms of a history, because the theme of christology is not a phenomenon, or a combination of phenomena, but a 'history.'<sup>24</sup> The movement 'from above' and the movement 'from below' are 'not two different and successive states,' but the history of 'two opposed but strictly related moments' which 'operate together' and 'mutually interpret one another' (CD IV/2, 106). Moreover, in rejecting the view of static states, Barth points out that we must not see the humiliation and exaltation as separate or different states: He was first humiliated and not yet exalted; then He was exalted and no longer humiliated. This view tears apart the unity of descent and ascent (CD IV/2, 110). As for Barth, the exaltation begins and is completed *already* in and with the humiliation, and *vice versa*. These simultaneous events are the 'inter-connexion' (CD IV/2, 110).

This reinterpretation of the life-act of Jesus Christ as a 'history' or 'event' and not a state, is what Barth means when he says that *revelation* is not a naturally given fact but *a new event of gift every moment*.<sup>25</sup> This is what Barth says when he points out that the humanity of Christ must be understood in terms of 'history' rather than a 'nature' (CD IV/2, 26). This is what Barth means by *humanitas* itself being in motion, from the far country back to the home (CD IV/2, 29). Having understood the divine self-revelation as a history or event which is manifested in and through the life-act of Jesus Christ, 'There is no reason to mistake the pure

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<sup>24</sup> 'Wir haben ... jene ganze Phänomenologie zurückübersetzt in den Bericht von einer Geschichte' (CD IV/2, 106; KD 118).

<sup>25</sup> Karl Barth, *Table Talk* (1962) recorder and ed. John D. Godsey, 92-93; 'revelation always means revealing ...' (CD I/1, 321, 306, par. 371; *The Christian Life: CD IV/4, Lecture Fragments* (1981 [1979<sup>2</sup>= 1959-1961]), p. 236).

humanity of Jesus Christ in relation to the empowering which comes to His human essence by the electing grace of God. We insist that its function is that of an organ of the Son of Man who is also and primarily the Son of God' (CD IV/2, 98). For this reason Barth clarifies that 'the Subject of atonement and therefore of incarnation, Jesus Christ, is the Son of God. This is the reason and compelling power of this history. This is the meaning and force in which what happened in this history has and is eternal and temporal being' (CD IV/2, 65). Thus Barth warns us not to describe Jesus Christ as the 'God-man (*Gottmenschen*)', and His essence as 'divine-human (*gottmenschlich*)' or 'divine-humanity (*Gottmenschheit*),' because the word 'God-man obscures' the *novum* of the act of God (CD IV/2, 115; KD 128). This is what Barth means as he proceeds to say that 'The one Word of Jesus Christ is His self-expression as God's eternal Word, and it is also the corresponding, but not identical, word of the proclamation of this man as humanly articulated and conditioned' (CD IV/2, 116). In other words, 'The divine is still above and the human below' (CD IV/2, 116). But to be more specific there is even more to say on what we have previously mentioned in terms of the necessity of safeguarding the nature itself from the danger of its mixture, and, as such rejecting the Mariology of the Roman Catholic Church. We suppose that stressing the divine act was also necessary in order to re-confirm the *antecedent validity* of the work of reconciliation. If humankind contributed something to the work of reconciliation then the power and validity of our reconciliation cannot be guaranteed, since they are not only sinners but also capricious.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For this reason Barth stresses the power and warrenty of humankind's reconciliation, not primarily on their faith in, or acceptance of, the fact of reconciliation, but on the prophetic office and work of Christ in terms of 'Jesus Christ the Guarantor' (CD IV/3).

## II. The Centrality of the *Royal Man*

### 1. The *Royal Man*, the Sole Integrator of 'high' Christology - the Concrete Dual Manifestation of Christology both 'from above' and 'from below'

We have said that as far as the visible and responsible ground of christology is concerned the issue is about the humanity of divinity (*die Humanität Gottes*) and not the divinity of humanity. Notably Barth also describes the *Royal Man*, as 'the divine humanity'.<sup>27</sup> Yet these two different appellations by no means implies a contradiction. It rather undergirds the true centrality of the *Royal Man*, because *this Royal Man* is *this* divinity, the divine humanity. He is the human divinity and the divine humanity. To apply this view for our thesis first of all demonstrates that this *Royal Man* integrates all the elements and aspects of 'high' christology into Himself. Further this *Royal Man* represents not only the movement 'from below to above' but also 'from above to below'. In such a way this *Royal Man* reveals Himself to be the sole *integrator* of both 'from above' and 'from below'. The important point is that Barth brings these two aspects together neither in a celestial being nor even in the concept of Logos itself, but in the *earthly* reality of the *Royal Man*. Incidentally, our previous comment that the divinity is revealed nowhere but in the humanity of Jesus Christ is not to say that the humanity is a kind of husk within the divine kernel. On the contrary it constitutes the very content. Christology stands only on its 'historical identity'.<sup>28</sup> The reconciliation is achieved in such a

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<sup>27</sup> '*die Gottmenschheit*' (CD IV/2, 52, 57; KD 56, 61).

<sup>28</sup> (CD IV/1, 67). If the historical identity is so important for Barth's christology, a question of the vulnerability of history is possible. In other words, would his christology have been different from the present one if the historical setting of Jesus Christ was different? This question of the vulnerability of history is a question of whether Barth understands the history of reconciliation as a contingent or a necessary event. Contingency implies undeterminateness or no plan. If the history is contingent, then hardly any gravity of this particular historical identity would be left to rely on it in terms of its *finale potentia* or its authenticity. Thus Barth affirms that the history of reconciliation is not a contingent but a necessary event. This affirmation is well expressed in his special emphasis on Jesus being a Jew, in particular. This emphasis implies the following points.

*Firstly*, that Jesus of Nazareth is a Jew reveals an indispensable continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He was a fulfilment of promise. This suggests that the divine incarnation is not an arbitrary or contingent event which could be easily compared with any other general event and then finally dissolved in it, but a determined event. It is not any generalised view of the man Jesus but a particular Jew was the Word who became the Saviour of the world. 'His



way that 'God keeps faith in time ... with all men *in this one man*' (CD IV/1, 67 ea). And what Barth meant this 'one man' is specifically by the life-act of this *Royal Man*. We need to recollect the fact that Barth not only integrates the two movements into this *Royal Man* as the *Gestalt* of his whole christology, but he also actually *envisions* this integration in terms of this life-act of *Royal Man*. For this precise reason, and only for this precise reason because we also do affirm that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above' as well, this *Royal Man* is the centre in Barth's christology, and, as such his christology is a christology 'from below'. If we deny that the *Royal Man* manifests the divinity of the man Jesus of Nazareth, then what we are also saying is that Barth 'functionalised' christology. This implication is so critical that we doubt whether we could bear this implication without affecting not only Barth's christology but also his whole theology.

Again, those who suppose that Barth has a christology 'from above' could be even more firmly encouraged by the following observation. Barth, in explicating the meaning of the *assumptio carnis* (CD IV/2, 44-116), supremely and therefore constantly reminds us of the fact that the *assumptio carnis* is 'an absolutely new

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universality is revealed in this particularity' (CD IV/1, 167). Secondly, Jesus suffers 'essentially' and 'necessarily' (CD IV/2, 172) since the history of reconciliation is a fulfilment of the covenant made by God with the Israelites who was unfaithful and disobedient to Him. To see the Jesus of the New Testament in line with the Old Testament 'prevents the rounding off the picture of Jesus into a kind of ideal-picture of human existence.' Jesus', being the particular Jew, shows us that the history of atonement (redemption) is 'the history of the passion.' This is the meaning and purpose of the linking of the New Testament with that of Old Testament witness. As such the Old Testament is an 'authentic commentary' (CD IV/1, 168) to, and 'indispensable presupposition' (CD IV/1, 173) of, the New Testament. Doctrinally speaking, this means that the witness of the New Testament does not allow any kind of Docetism (CD IV/1, 168). Docetism attempts to nullify the concrete truth of the history of atonement as the history of passion. Theologically speaking, this means, for Barth, that the event of atonement took place 'on earth' (CD IV/1, 168). Christologically speaking, for the purpose of our thesis, this means that we cannot think of the greatness of the divine movement 'from above', and therefore christology itself, outside the divine manifestation 'from below'. This is what Barth means when he says that 'The particularity of the man Jesus in proceeding from the one elect people of Israel, as the confirmation of its election, means decisively that the reconciliation of sinful and lost man has, above all, the character of a divine condescension, that takes place as God goes into the far country' (CD IV/1, 168). At best, if we could infer and modify this view of history at all without any sophistication, we might say that the content of the message would be the same even if its form could be different from the event of two thousand years ago.

event,' 'a new act of God.'<sup>29</sup> Further, the 'meaning,' 'force,' and 'reason' for dealing with this reconciliatory history exist in the fact that it is God who is the Subject of this history (CD IV/2, 65). In short, Barth has a 'high' christology because his christology is possible and is actualised solely by the divine act of incarnation 'from above' and therefore all the rest are secondary matters. This view is true but needs clarification.

Undoubtedly, we do also affirm that Barth's christology consists, by and large, of a 'high' christology. However, if we are to appreciate this 'high' christology more fully and accurately we cannot stop our examination here. For Barth says much more than this 'from above' element in his christology. To get a fairer glimpse of this 'high' christology we need to know the context of this constant emphasis. Barth's emphasis upon God as being the sole Subject emerges in the course of his exposition about the historical fulfilment of the concept of incarnation. In this explication Barth articulates that God truly assumed existence as a human being. Then he concludes that the historical fulfilment of the concept of incarnation is the 'secret of the becoming and being of the existence of Jesus Christ' (CD IV/2, 44, cf. 36-44). Having come to this conclusion, Barth goes into a detailed exposition of the meaning of this *assumptio carnis* with the four points: 1) this one God became and is also man (CD IV/2, 45-50; KD 47); 2) there is only the 'one God the Son (*Einer Gott der Sohn*),' and not two existences (CD IV/2, 50-60; KD 53, 67); 3) the divine and human essence are 'united (*vereinigt*)' in the one Jesus Christ (CD 60-69; KD 64); 4) God 'exalted' human essence into a 'perfect fellowship' with Himself, starting with the humanity of Jesus Christ and then all humankind.<sup>30</sup> In this explication Barth particularly acknowledges the difficulty in accepting the third point that the divine and human essence were and are united in the one Jesus Christ. However Barth argues that we will have to encounter this

<sup>29</sup> 'ein schlechthin neues Geschehen', 'eine neue Tat Gottes' (CD IV/2, 37; KD 39).

<sup>30</sup> (CD IV/2, 69-116). 'In His being as man God has implicitly assumed the human being of all men. In Him not only we all as *homines*, but our *humanitas* as such-for it is both His and ours-exist in and with God Himself' (*ibid.*, 59).

unique Subject in the 'acknowledgment and recognition and confession of its particular truth,'<sup>31</sup> because, this unique Subject comes to us as *this Royal Man*, as this concrete human being. As this unique Subject is so concrete He 'demands (*fordert*)' this statement of unitedness (CD IV/2, 61; KD 66) as an *actuality in concreto* and not as a possibility of general truth or as the metaphysical union *in abstracto*. Otherwise, Barth says, his christology would be simply a speculative christology.

Along this clear cut line that divine is divine and human is human, Barth further develops the fourth point of perfect fellowship in terms of 'impartation (*Mitteilung*)' (CD IV/2, 73-83). Divine essence imparts itself to that of humanity and human essence receives the impartation of divine since it is God who assumed humanity. So there is no divinisation of humanity, but only a perfect fellowship in virtue of a 'mutual participation' through a 'complete openness (*gänzliche Offenheit*)' (CD IV/2, 70; KD 80) from the two natures. In short, the order (priority) 'God and human being' is not to be reversed as 'human being and God' in their relationship. Yet we must not overlook that Barth, in the course of this emphasis upon divine initiative, reminds us of the fact that 'Again, whatever belongs to divine or human essence, whatever characterises or distinguishes the one or the other as such, is to be seen concretely in Jesus Christ, and to be thought and said concretely of Him' (CD IV/2, 74).

Also, we must pay full attention to Barth's deliberate use of the term 'God the Son'<sup>32</sup> in lieu of the Son of God (*der Sohn Gottes*) in describing this unique Subject. The term 'God the Son' not only adequately expresses the true ontology of God being *ad intra* but also fully and concretely reveals His being *ad extra*. This implies, for Barth, that the true God must be constituted in the correspondence between the conceptual God and the real God. Having implied this necessity of

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<sup>31</sup> The logical step of the three terms are: firstly, accept (*anerkennen*) it, secondly, recognise (*erkennen*) what the person accepted, and then thirdly, confess (*bekennen*) what the person recognised (CD IV/2, 61; KD [1955] 66).

<sup>32</sup> 'Gott der Sohn' (CD IV/2, 50, 62; KD 53, 67 etc.).

correspondence, Barth refers to the term *Royal Man* as the concrete manifestation of this correspondence. Differently put, it is important to note that Barth integrates all the element of 'high' christology into this *Royal Man*, the aspect of this 'low' christology. Having clarified who this Subject is, Barth then turns to the actual life-act of the *Royal Man* in order to give clear evidence for his theoretical clarification. In short, Barth integrates all the *Gestalt* of christology into *this Royal Man*: 'Our starting-point here is the first and final fact that the being of this *Royal Man* Jesus was not only identical with the glory of God in the highest, ... but also identical on earth with peace among men as the object of the divine good-pleasure.'<sup>33</sup> Moreover Barth, in accounting the 'common actualisation' of divine and human essence under the *communicatio operationum* as a narrower sense (CD IV/2, 113-116), notes that neither the divine essence nor the human essence is actual of itself. On the contrary, both the divine and the human essences are actual only in virtue of the identity of the Son of God with the Son of Man *in the person* of Jesus Christ, the *Royal Man*. Hence, this common actualisation is the *novum* of both divine and human essences. In this one person? Yes. 'The One who acts and speaks is One. And as such He guarantees the common nature of His self-actualisation as this divine and human *novum*, the unity of the great *novum* in its twofold form (CD IV/2, 114). In such a way, the *Royal Man* is the dual manifestation of both 'from above' and 'from below', God's perfect fellowship with human being and human being's perfect fellowship with God (CD IV/2, 167).

Who then is this *Royal Man* who alone integrates the christology 'from above' and therefore manifests both 'from above' and 'from below'? What makes Him the sole integrator and dual manifestation? We will explore these questions in the next section.

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<sup>33</sup> (CD IV/2, 158). The covenant broken by Israel and the whole of humanity is maintained in nothing but 'the life-act of this one man' (CD IV/2, 167).

## 2. The Royal Man, the Proper Content of Christology

According to Barth, this *Royal Man* 'is created "after God" (κατὰ θεόν).' He is the εἰκὼν (Col 1:15), the 'reflection' and 'image' of God Himself.<sup>34</sup> He exists 'analogously (*analog*)' to the mode of the existence of God (CD IV/2, 166; KD 185). As such, He is and reveals the 'Nevertheless of the Creator' (CD IV/2, 167). Barth advises us not to trivialise the fact that the *Royal Man* is the reflection and image of God. The reason for this advice is that this identity has the following significant insights for a proper understanding of the *Royal Man*.

### 1) The Identity of the Royal Man

That the *Royal Man* is the 'image' and 'reflection' of God Himself implies, *first of all*, that He shares 'the strange destiny (*das wunderliche Los*)' of God (CD IV/2, 167; KD 186). The *Royal Man*, in His conformity with the existence and act of God, faithfully represented the most miserable God who is the most Almighty: His power in weakness, glory in lowliness, victory in defeat, richest in poverty, exaltation in humiliation, genuine unity with God in drastic isolation and estrangement from God, life in crucifixion. This strange destiny in its drastic way was necessary so as to manifest the 'genuine incarnation' of the Word in the most concrete way (CD IV/2, 167-168; KD 186-188). Here Barth points out that the inevitability of this history is not always grasped even though it is often stated. The One who was despised not only in His own country, but also among His family (Mk 6:4); the One who became an 'offence' to those around Him: the people of Nazareth (Matt 13:39), John the Baptist (Matt 11:16), His disciples (Mk 14:29); the One who was crowned with thorns by the Roman soldier and was mocked on the cross; and finally the one who was forsaken not only by the people but also by God - this One is this *Royal Man*. It is this *Royal Man* who entered into this most radical isolation from God in this world. In other words, by the God who entered

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<sup>34</sup> 'widerspiegelt und abbildet' (CD IV/2, 167, 179; KD 200).



into this world 'from above' Barth means this *Royal Man* who genuinely reveals true being of God the Revealer in this form of strange destiny as a servant.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the *Royal Man* sharing His destiny with God is uncompromisingly demonstrated in His 'partiality.'<sup>36</sup> The *Royal Man*, in His conformity and 'distinctive solidarity' with the poor and weak God, became 'almost to the point of prejudice,' divine *partiality* for the poor, the weak, and the low. The *Royal Man* 'ignored (*vorübersah*)'<sup>37</sup> all those who were mighty, high, and wealthy in favour of the weak, meek, and lowly; the just for sinners; and Israel for the Gentiles. Necessarily, then, 'We do not know God at all if we do not know Him as the One who is absolutely opposed to our whole world' (CD IV/2, 179-180). In other words, 'we do not really know Jesus ... if we do not know Him as this poor man, as this ... *partisan of the poor* (*Parteigänger der Armen*), and finally as this revolutionary' (CD IV/2, 180 ea; KD 200). Therefore, 'If we think we know Him in any other way, what we really know ... is only the world itself, ourselves, the old Adam. In the man Jesus, God has separated Himself from this misinterpretation' (CD IV/2, 180). In such a way of partiality, the *Royal Man* fulfilled God's 'transvaluation'<sup>38</sup> of the worldly values and views. This transvaluation is seen in the witness of New Testament writings, but especially in Luke and James.<sup>39</sup>

Thirdly, the conformity of the *Royal Man* with God is further highlighted

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<sup>35</sup> (CD IV/2, 168). Barth, at this point, draws our special attention to the fact that God entered this world in the form of a servant and not a Lord. This hidden kingly rule could not remain hidden. For His lordship could not be compromised, but only confirmed, by all this history. The knowledge that His lordship is revealed rather in this terrible and most miserable history derives from the witness of the Holy Spirit. If this were not the case His history could also have been one of many human histories which have been lost in world history, and with similar events, if there are any (CD IV/2, 168). In this way, the saying in Matthew 11:29, in which Jesus described Himself as *πραῶς* and *ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ*, is not moralistic self-boasting, but His confession of the humiliation of the Son of God put into effect by Him as the Son of Man, of the genuine incarnation of the Word as it took place in Him (CD IV/2, 167-168).

<sup>36</sup> '*parteiisch*' (CD IV/2, 168-171; KD 188-191).

<sup>37</sup> Barth plays on words here. He uses the word *vorübersah* ('ignored') instead of *übersah* ('overlook') in order to stress the divine *partiality* (*parteiisch*) for the weak and the oppressed (CD IV/2, 179; KD 188).

<sup>38</sup> '*Umwertung*' (CD IV/2, 168-169; KD 188).

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor 1:25f.; 2 Cor 8:9, 12:9 (CD IV/2, 169-171).

in His 'revolutionary character (*revolutionären Charakter*)' towards the orders of life and value around Him (CD IV/2, 171-180; KD 191-200). He did not organise a new party or join any of the existing parties. Neither did He represent any political, moral or religious programmes. He was detested by all these, although He did not particularly attack any of them. The reason for their dislike is that 'He set all programmes and principles in question.' He did this simply because He 'enjoyed' and 'displayed' a 'royal freedom.'<sup>40</sup> He did not oppose any 'system'; any worldly systems or structures in order to reform them. As He is the image of this God and exists as the mode of the existence of God, He ruthlessly exposed the darkness and limit of human systems and orders. He simply revealed the limit and frontier of all these things by making use of this freedom of the kingly rule of God to cut right across all these systems. It was for this reason that the freedom of *the kingly rule of God is simply He Himself* which shed these systems and orders. He therefore inevitably clashed with these orders and systems. As a result, the provisional and relative character of the worldly systems and orders, and their 'secret fallibility' were occasionally but unmistakeably disclosed. What made His revolutionary character far more radical than any other possible revolutionary characters was the freedom itself. This freedom could not be classified from any worldly point of view, for His freedom stands against the belief that low is low and high is high, or good is good and bad is bad. This paradoxical fact that God gives Himself to the world, yet without being bound to any of the worldly systems or orders, is what makes His life-act all the more revolutionary, and as such an

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<sup>40</sup> 'königliche Freiheit' (CD IV/2, 172; KD 191). This revolutionary character, which questions all human thoughts and values, resembles the character of Post-modernism which too is cynical to all the modern worldly values and systems in its principle: The *Royal Man* Jesus is the invading kingly rule of God Himself. As the coming of the new kingdom He *transvalues* all the worldly values or views. In such a way His life-act was revolutionary in its character. This character corresponds (more or less) to the post-modernism which is basically a movement of 'deconstruction' of modern systems of thoughts or values. Post-modernism is *cynical*. Likewise, the kingly rule of God ruthlessly revealed the darkness of human systems or orders, and its limits. *The kingdom puts all* (not only modernism) *the worldly structures or systems in question*. Incidentally, that the phrase *theologia viatorum* in Christian theology also affirms all the human systems and thoughts, including (Christian) theology, is relative and never should be a fixed truth.

‘unmistakeable sign, of His freedom and kingdom and over-ruling of history’ (CD IV/2, 172-173). In short, the overall character of the *Royal Man*’s life-act was revolutionary, a ‘radical antithesis (*radikaler Gegensatz*)’ (CD IV/2, 177; KD 197) although He seems to endorse a *status quo* of all the systems, orders or structures of the world: a ‘passive conservatism’ (CD IV/2, 173-179).

*Fourthly*, this strange, revolutionary, and partial life-act of the *Royal Man* is ultimately *for* humankind. His strange destiny was for our reconciliation. His revolutionary life-act was to reveal the true world value and view. His partiality was to unfold and reveal what kind of God He is. In this way the most powerful *Yes* is spoken in and through the life-act of the *Royal Man* even though the *Yes* includes a powerful *No*. Thus His ‘image’ and ‘reflection’ is the ‘image’ and ‘reflection’ of the *Yes* of God to humankind and to the world. This divine *Yes* manifests the faithfulness, love, glory, and solidarity of God with the cosmos. The divine *Yes* echoed by this *Royal Man* is the ‘divine Word of comfort’ for human misery (CD IV/2, 180). Indeed ‘His weapon against it [sin] is the Gospel.’ Therefore His life-act is the Gospel itself.<sup>41</sup> In short the whole life-act of the *Royal Man* is the ‘correspondence’ to and ‘parallelism’ of the will and action of God in the creaturely world (CD IV/2, 166-192).

## 2) The Life-act of the *Royal Man* as the Kingly Rule of God *Per Se*

A proper understanding of the identity of the *Royal Man* necessarily involves an understanding of His work as well, since His life ‘*was*’<sup>42</sup> His act. Thus the life-act of the *Royal Man* has the character of history (CD IV/2, 193; KD 214). In other words, the *Royal Man*’s distinctive correspondence and parallelism are actual, seen, and comprehended by His life-act. This implies two things.

*Firstly*, His life-act was His *Word* in both a concrete and a comprehensive

<sup>41</sup> For Barth’s hermeneutical references on the argument see (CD IV/2, 181-192).

<sup>42</sup> ‘*Indem sein Leben seine Tat war*’ (CD IV/2, 193; KD 294).

sense (CD IV/2, 194-209). The *Royal Man* used ordinary human words and not special language or any distinctive terminology. The early community felt free to listen to his human words. The community of the Gospel did not hesitate to receive the sayings in the different versions. No one seems to have thought historical exactness worthwhile when the Aramaic originals were interposed into the Greek texts (Mk 5:41, 7:34, 15:34). In the Greek texts Jesus used not only the terminology of later Judaism but also on occasion that of extra-Judaic Hellenism (CD IV/2, 194-195). The human Word of Jesus was accepted as a supremely particular and distinctive Word, even in its formal and material similarity with so much of Rabbinism, even in the different versions given by the Evangelists, and even in its translation into Hellenistic thought forms and language. Through all these prisms, He enlightened and instructed the community 'as the royal Word of the royal man concerning the royal dominion of God' (CD IV/2, 195). This was done with an originality which could not be diminished by any Judaistic or Hellenistic covering. His community heard Him speak. In this way, it was not only the community, but also the whole cosmos, that was confronted with the primary and dominating aspect of His life-act, and therefore Himself. The community heard His Word as the Word of reconciliation intended and directed for it (CD IV/2, 195) as the New Testament describes it in terms of εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, διδάσκειν, and κηρύσσειν.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus Christ Himself is both the One who brings good-news (εὐαγγελιζόμενος) and the εὐαγγέλιον itself (Ac 10:36; Rom 1:1; Mk 1:14); the good-news that speaks of God (objective genitive) and the good-news that God Himself has spoken in the world (subjective genitive). In other words, εὐαγγελίζεσθαι naturally speaks of God, as the man Jesus speaks of Him. And conversely, it is God Himself

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<sup>43</sup> (CD IV/2, 195-209). Four general observations of these three terms are: (i) All the three terms are applied *absolutely*. So the readers of Jesus' saying know its *clarity*. (ii) They *converge* strongly although they are not synonymous. (iii) The words apply to both Jesus Himself and His disciples. So they characterise the action of the *totus-Christus*, to which His community belong; to the earthly form of His body. (iv) In the Gospels and Acts, one of these terms are always given the first place which denotes the accompanying acts of Jesus: ἰᾶσθαι, θεραπεύειν, ἐκβάλλειν τὰ δαιμόνια. But the first without the second, and not the second without the first (CD IV/2, 196).

who has spoken and awakened this man to speak.<sup>44</sup> Scripture witnesses to *Jesus Christ Himself as being the content of Gospel and salvation itself*.<sup>45</sup> This implies that *Jesus Christ Himself is the kingly rule of God*.<sup>46</sup> Therefore there is no point in arguing whether the ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as the beginning of the Gospel that Jesus proclaimed (subjective genitive) or as the beginning of the Gospel that proclaimed Him (objective genitive). For they both converge in Jesus Christ (CD IV/2, 196-198).

The distinctiveness of the New Testament's διδάσκειν lies in its *call to repentance* although its apparent content and form were like the teaching of rabbis. Like all other rabbis, Jesus did look back to the Old Testament and taught it. Nevertheless, for Jesus the Old Testament was not merely the record of a normative past, but it was also the book of the *present* and the *future* (CD IV/2, 198-199). When Jesus was teaching, His presence was not one among other times, but *fulfilled kairos* to which all the past and the future word and event can move. 'The new thing in His teaching was the fact that ... He Himself was there' (200).

The κηρύσσειν of Jesus was not about 'moral rearmament,' or a zeal for wanting to better things and to know more. Nor was it a plan for the moral and sacramental elevation and development of humanity, even to the point of its deification. The διδάσκειν of the New Testament is not a pedagogic action (CD IV/2, 203). Although the New Testament has similarity to the ancient Greek κήρυξ, the New Testament's term has 'the point of conjunction of this concrete past and the concrete future' (CD IV/2, 203). So it had something to say about the dawning of the new age, the forgiveness of sin, the coming kingdom, the grace and wrath of God, a radical conversion and renewal of man, or God becoming man (CD IV/2, 202). The event of the Exodus and entering into Canaan had always to be

<sup>44</sup> Matt 11:3f.; Lk 4:17f.; Eph 2:14, 17 (CD IV/2, 197).

<sup>45</sup> Lk 2:10f., 4:17f.; Gal 1:16; Ac 8:35, 5:42, 10:36, 11:20, 17:18; Eph 2:14, 17, 3:8; 1 Pet 1:11f.; Matt 11:3f.; Jn 5:39, 45f. (CD IV/2, 200).

<sup>46</sup> Lk 22:30, 23:42; Jn 18:36; Eph 5:5: ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ; Mk 9:1 is replaced by Matt 16:28 and Ac 8:12, 11:9f.; Matt 21:9; Lk 19:38; Ac 28:31; Rev 12:10 (CD IV/2, 197-198).



commemorated in the words of the Old Testament, but they could not be 'proclaimed' as the great acts of salvation. They were the lasting promise of the fulfilment of salvation but they are not themselves the fulfilment (CD IV/2, 204). The New Testament has this salvific character as the point of conjunction between the concrete past and the concrete future in its form as *kerygma*. It is this is the conclusive and definitive language, meaning 'decision' which the New Testament means by 'preaching.' Where the teaching of the New Testament differs from all others is in His teaching that 'you see and hear what many prophets and righteous desired to see and hear and could not hear or see' (Matt 13:17). 'Jesus does not speak of someone or something that comes. He is Himself the One who comes, and with His coming there comes everything that is to come' (CD IV/2, 205). Jesus does not speak of an assumption of power which has still to come, but of that which is accomplished as He Himself comes. His speaking was a definitive act and *vice versa*. This identity is something which is more than ordinary human speech. If the Christian *kerygma* is greater than any other human speech it is the case only because it is about *this* Jesus Christ (CD IV/2, 205). This is what Paul means when he says that Christian preaching is the Word of the cross (1 Cor 1:18), that is, the Word of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19). Paul's Gospel is the *kerygma* of Jesus Christ, the Gospel which is proclaimed by Jesus Christ and therefore which proclaims Himself (CD IV/2, 208).

*Secondly*, His Word was also wholly His *activity* not alongside the fact that it was His Word, but 'as' His Word (CD IV/2, 209-247). Namely, His concrete activity always accompanies the accounts of His concrete speech as an 'inner' and 'basic necessity' (CD IV/2, 209-247). As for Barth 'it is quite impossible to think of ... His concrete work as accessory or subordinate; as something which demands only identical consideration and can at a pinch be overlooked' (CD IV/2, 209). His activity was 'the light of the truth of His speech kindling into actuality.'<sup>47</sup> 'More pertinently, it is the demonstration of the coincidence, or identity, of His

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<sup>47</sup> 'das in die Wirklichkeit hineinleuchtende Licht der Wahrheit seines Redens' (CD IV/2, 209; KD 232).

proclamation of the kingdom of God, the lordship of God, the divine *coup d'état*, with the event itself.<sup>48</sup> It is not for nothing that His activity was accompanied by His Word, not alongside the Word but as His Word. For this accompaniment of activity dismantles the illusion that 'only a Word' or 'a spiritual event would do enough' for the fulfilment of its purpose by immediately accomplishing the corresponding change in the physical, visible, and palpable circumstances of the world. *His Word is not an ambiguous or abstract Word, but is a concrete action and individual history.* This concreteness implies that a definitive Word is spoken in the unequivocal form of a definitive action. As such His Word is spoken in power. The activity of Jesus has always the characteristic that it is still His preaching of the Gospel in this total and cosmic form. What is distinctive about this activity is that it is always the revelation of His human existence among other human beings (CD IV/2, 209-211).

### 3) The Uniqueness of the Miraculous Nature<sup>49</sup> of the Act of the Royal Man

The acts of the *Royal Man* differed from acts of other human beings since they were 'miracles (*Wundertaten*)' (CD IV/2, 211; KD 234). The Gospel narratives describe the presence of an 'extraordinary reality (*außerordentlichen Wirklichkeit*)' although there are some ordinary realities.<sup>50</sup> His activity was 'paradoxical' in its character (Lk 5:26). This paradoxical character in the fact that astonishment, amazement, opposition, and fear was the response to the new thing that the *Royal Man* proclaimed in His Word and introduced in His existence. The people around Jesus were brought to confess Him 'as the sum of human being and seeing and understanding' (CD IV/2, 211) despite the fact that they could neither explain His

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<sup>48</sup> 'Sein Handeln ist, sachlich gesagt: der Erweis jener Koinzidenz, ja Identität seiner Verkündigung des Reiches, der Machtergreifung, der Herrschaft Gottes mit diesem Geschehen selbst und als solchem' (CD IV/2, 209; KD 232).

<sup>49</sup> 'Wundercharakter' or 'supernatural character (*«supranaturale» Art*)' (CD IV/2, 212; KD 235).

<sup>50</sup> Lk 2:43; Mk 10:16, cf. 9:36, 11:1f.; Jn 13:1f. (CD IV/2, 210-211; KD 233-234).

activity nor did they understand it.<sup>51</sup>

Barth admits that there were and could be found many reports of astonishing and extraordinary events or miracles in the time of Jesus. Yet the New Testament writers were not interested in comparing them with the activity of Jesus nor in having his activity rivalled, trivialised, or relativised by the accounts of god. Despite all the unavoidable similarities of the extraordinary activities of Jesus to those of some of His contemporary's accounts of wonders (miracles), His activity was neither attacked by these contemporary's accounts, nor does the account of His activity need to attack them. They are on a 'different level' (CD IV/2, 212-214). Scripture makes virtually no mention of them at all, with the exception of the reference to the action of the disciples of the Pharisees. Paul also mentions that there are many gods and lords (1 Cor 8:5).<sup>52</sup> However, the acts of Jesus attested to in the New Testament are, in their unity with the good news, 'absolutely different' (CD IV/2, 215; KD 238) from all other human or cosmic occurrence, usual or unusual, ordinary or relatively extraordinary. In relation to all other normal or abnormal events they are 'absolute miracles (*absolute Wunder*)' for which even the word supernatural or supranatural is not really adequate. It is only as such that they can be credible in the New Testament sense. What makes His life-act absolutely unique? According to Barth the miraculous and alien thing which takes place in the acts of Jesus is the kingly rule of God:

The new thing of the kingdom of God is not the extraordinary, the inconceivable, the supernatural, the heavenly or the other-worldly of an epitome of formal transcendence, of an absolutely superior omnipotence which encounters man

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<sup>51</sup> Barth at this juncture also points out that this incomprehensible reality, and yet its confrontation with people, also applies to His word as well. Those who heard were confronted with the same new thing whether they believed or not. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:29) is no less a miraculous Word - the incomprehensible eruption - than the raising of the young man at Nain (Lk 7:11f.). So keeping Rudolf Bultmann's view of demythologisation in mind, Barth states that 'Those who try to throw doubt on the distinctive action of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, by referring it to the sphere of mythology, must ask themselves whether in the first instance it is not *His* teaching, as recorded in the same Gospels, that must be referred to this sphere. For it leaves no less to be desired - and perhaps much more - in terms of normal apprehension' (CD IV/2, 211 ea; KD 234).

<sup>52</sup> In fact there are, and should be, many more extraordinary events outside the New Testament if God is the God of the *universe*.

anonymously, and therefore of the empty secret of his existence (CD IV/2, 215; KD 238-239).

For the above understanding of the kingdom of God is merely the 'sum of all the false gods imagined and fabricated by man' (CD IV/2, 215). This 'empty secret' is not the absolute miracle at all. For the absolute miracle reveals itself as such in order not to give any pretence of denial or misunderstanding of the absolute miracles. A true miracle is an open secret and not an empty or hidden secret. In the same way, the ordinaryness, the naturalness, the conceivability, and the this-worldliness that confronts the kingly reign of God, is not just the epitome of the creatureliness of man and the limitation of his capacity, experience and knowledge. For the kingly reign of God, who is the Creator of humankind, cannot be merely a negation of his creatureliness. His coming is more than just an invasion of this creatureliness. There is this negation and corresponding penetrations.

Considering the presence of the kingly rule of God, and as such, all the peculiarity<sup>53</sup> of the miracles, the miraculous life-act of the *Royal Man* cannot so easily be equated with the relative 'miracles' which are bound in past and present time. The action of the *Royal Man* is the unique miracle and power of the kingly rule of God. Indeed 'the miracles of Jesus, as the miracles of the kingdom of God'<sup>54</sup> reject any simple, direct, or approximate identification with any human

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<sup>53</sup> (i) The majority of the miracle-stories indicate that Jesus does not take the initiative in His performance. Jesus does not 'make' miracles; He does them. Miracles did not occur intentionally (ii) Jesus does not make use of any therapeutic techniques like physical, psychological, or magical in miracles of healing. (iii) Jesus did not perform miracles for His own interests. (iv) Jesus' miracles were not a welfare programme - to improve the human lot or condition - continuing after the miracles and as such creating an institution. (v) The miracles of Jesus are the 'cosmic actualisation of His *kerygma*,' and are performed in the twofold context: service to faith and the call to faith. Their significance lies in its indissoluble connection of proclamation, miracle, and faith, for an actualization of His Word, as a call to repentance and faith. (vi) The transparent character of the miracles of Jesus are seen, not only in the Johannine Gospel, but also belong to the connection between proclamation, miracle, and faith. The Evangelists are not only wishing to say that this or that happened in this or that concrete actualisation of the kingly rule of God, but are also wanting to say that Jesus gave us a model or 'original' of certain situations in the history of the development, being, formation, and work of the community for which the disciples are charged with the continued proclamation of the Gospel, the kingdom and Jesus' own name. In this respect, the miracles are not accidental but are meaningful historical acts (CD IV/2, 216-218; KD 239-242).

<sup>54</sup> 'Die Wunder Jesu als die Wunder des Reiches Gottes' (CD IV/2, 216; KD 239).

antitheses and miracles. This alone characterises the actions of the *Royal Man* as absolute miracles as opposed to those miracles which took place and still take place in our human antitheses, world (CD IV/2, 216).

What is the kingly rule of God, and what does Barth mean when he says that the acts of Jesus were the miracles of this kingly rule? To Barth, the general trend or the nature of the miracles of the *Royal Man* holds the answer. The acts of the *Royal Man* are 'acts of power (*Machttaten*)' (CD IV/2, 219; KD 243). They are done with a 'divine' and 'unconditional freedom' (CD IV/2, 219), and thus they are absolutely sovereign, alien, incomprehensible, and transcendent in relation to all other forms, orders, and developments. So the acts of the *Royal Man* cannot be measured by human thought or scientific and natural laws. With the power of God the *Royal Man* does miracles in His service. To be precise, however, the miracles of the *Royal Man* are the revelation of 'the power of God' itself because the completely transcendent and alien power of God is revealed most concretely in and through the *Royal Man*. The kingly rule of God is a *dialectic* reality and *dialectic reality*. This implies that the kingly rule of God is not a fixed state but a dynamic event in history. For the same reason, the kingly reign of God is not another realm which is waiting to come into the world but another *reality* which is present in the world here and now. In this way the acts of the *Royal Man* are characterised by both mysteriousness and familiarity. A completely astonishing and new light is shed on the human situation. The kingly rule of God is therefore the 'miracle of miracles' which not only embraces all His miraculous acts but also empowers them. This miracle is that which encountered human beings as the unconditional power of God in the miracles of Jesus. The miraculous life-acts of the *Royal Man* are the actualisation of His Word (CD IV/2, 220-221). This concrete reality of the kingly rule of God comprises five things.

*Firstly*, the kingly rule of God uncovers the nature of humankind. It is in every sense 'unfortunate' and suffering. The whole cosmos may not be totally sick. But the miracles of the *Royal Man* cannot be brought into a proper focus and



genuinely seen or understood apart from this aspect of misfortune and suffering.<sup>55</sup>

*Secondly*, the miracles (life-act) of the *Royal Man* are concerned with the evil and deadly existence of humankind. His miracles aim to remove its prison of death. As such it is 'radically blessed' by His miracles. The important thing which the miracle stories tell us is not that the human person is a sinner (sinful), but that it is a sufferer (suffering). The *Royal Man* does not first look at its past, and then at its present tragedy in the light of the past. On the contrary, from its present He creates for it a new future. He does not ask about its sin. He helps and blesses quite irrespective of sin. Barth sees no trace of the statement that 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom 6:23) in the miracle stories. The miracle stories should not be painted in ethical colours as has been done by the Western Church. Ethicising the miracle stories is indeed expressly excluded (Jn 9:2f.; Lk 13:1). The σωζεσθαι has nothing whatever directly to do with the conversion of the 'saved'. It means that human beings are healed, made whole, normalised in the elemental sense. There is only one instance in which physical healing has to do with sin (Mk 2:1f., 5, 11). But even here there is no demand for repentance, but sin is annulled without examination. Again, there is only one story - the sick man at Bethesda for 38 years - which has a subsequent reference of physical healing to sin (Jn 5:14). Yet here too the point of story is the sovereign removal of the infirmity and not about a warning not to sin. There is no question of an ethical purpose on the part of the *Royal Man*, or of an ethical insight on the part of human beings. Truly, there is no mention of sin at all in the rest of the stories. They are taken seriously only as they are poor, tragic, and suffering creatures (CD IV/2, 222-224).

*Thirdly*, in the miracles of the *Royal Man*, God is always directly interested in human beings as His creatures. The miracles reveal that human beings are His in spite of its sin. God was present in such an unexpected way that He was there when we think He 'cannot' and 'should not' be present, beyond our common sense and value. This is what constitutes the strangeness, incomparability, and uniqueness

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<sup>55</sup> Mk 2:17, 1:40, 47, 9:22f.; Matt 4:24, 8:17, 25, 15:30, 17:27; Jn 2:1f.; Lk 5:3f. (CD IV/2, 221-222).

of the kingly rule of God over all other miracles in the world (CD IV/2, 224-225).

*Fourthly*, in the act of the miracles of Jesus, God places Himself at the side of human beings and their suffering. As such He suffers human suffering (CD IV/2, 225-232). God engages Himself in the 'nothingness,' which is sin and death, in order to save humankind from it. In short, 'His [the *Royal Man*'s] action is first and foremost the Gospel in action. Only then is it the new Law ...' (CD IV/2, 226).

In the Gospel of John, the *Royal Man* works in the name of the Father (Jn 10:25). Strictly speaking it is the indwelling Father Himself who does the miraculous (Jn 14:10). So they are the 'works of God' (Jn 9:3). The acuteness of the *Royal Man*'s works<sup>56</sup> in defence of His freedom, as the One who does the works of God, reflects the severity of assault and His work against the rule of 'nothingness' in the cosmos.<sup>57</sup> To sum up, the miracles of the *Royal Man* take the offensive form of military action, fulfilled by Jesus in the service of God. They are the declaration and manifestation of the nature and character of the kingly rule of God. His coming kingly rule is the defiance of the power of destruction which afflicts human beings. What is new and incomprehensible in them (and in us) is that God is a God who for the sake of human beings cannot rest on the sabbath but enters into the very root of human sufferings and confronts all these sufferings. Thus the sabbath truly became the day of worship, joy, and peace (CD IV/2, 232).

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<sup>56</sup> Jn 5:9, 8:12, 9:4, 14f.; Lk 13:10f., 14:1f.; Mk 3:4-5; Matt 16:3.

<sup>57</sup> The three examples of the *Royal Man*'s engagement in the reality of human nothingness are seen in the death of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:38f), the widow of Nain (Lk 7:14), and Lazarus (Jn 11:39f): The reason for Jesus' severity in that house of death is that He alone makes the decision of 'His solitary No to death, in the power of His solitary Yes to the omnipotent mercy of God' (CD IV/2, 226-227). It is exactly the same when He abruptly halts that funeral procession just outside the gate of Nain (Lk 7:14). In the story of the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:33f.), Jesus' weeping demonstrates His solidarity with the mourners, 'sympathetically bearing the burden of the whole age' (CD IV/2, 227). His weeping means that He is fighting for them, a strict repudiation of the cause of their, and His, weeping. It is itself a resolute No to this reality. He has the power because He is the resurrection and life. In addition, Jesus' exorcisms also reveal the 'total' and 'absolutely victorious clash of the kingdom of God with nothingness, with the whole world of the chaos negated by God, with the opposing realm of darkness' (CD IV/2, 230). At this point the miracles of the *Royal Man* invaded that which was introduced into the cosmos by the sin and guilt of human beings (CD IV/2, 230). The peculiar feature of the *Royal Man*'s rebukes (Mk 1:25, 5:8; Lk 4:36) is 'the absolute radicalism of the attack of Jesus in reflection of that vexation of God Himself' (CD IV/2, 231).

*Fifthly*, above all, the miracles of the *Royal Man* are ‘gloriously free grace,’ as the truth and reality of God Himself (CD IV/2, 232-247). Jesus was really interested in the suffering and misery of human beings rather than in the cause of human misery or in the bad side of human beings, viz. human sin. God Himself comes for the sufferers.<sup>58</sup>

Our analysis of the life-act of the *Royal Man* thus far clearly shows us that we cannot underestimate Barth’s continual emphasis that the constituency of the *Royal Man*’s secret character is His conformity with God. In other words, His miracles are unique in virtue of the kingly reign of God ‘from above’. The *Royal Man* exists simply in His service of God. Moreover, it is also an authentic impression that what is still dominant and determinative in the life-act of the *Royal Man* is the divine power ‘from above’. Hence Barth’s christology ‘should be’ a christology ‘from above’.

However, how could we interpret such a clear cut and stringent statement that ‘He [the *Royal Man*] comes as the king[ly rule] of God *in person*’ (CD IV/2, 216 ea)? The presence of the *Royal Man* meant the presence of the kingly rule of God. This is what makes Him absolutely unique and unforgettable. As such the *Royal Man* was σκάνδαλον (CD IV/2, 161). The *Royal Man* Jesus is the kingly rule of God: ‘Jesus, the kingdom of God’<sup>59</sup> interprets and determines all. In short ‘He [the *Royal Man*] was the kingdom of God’<sup>60</sup> brought on earth. That is to say, the truly *verifiable identity* of the kingly rule of God is found in nothing other and nowhere else than in *this Royal Man*, this christology ‘from below’. Our observa-

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<sup>58</sup> (CD IV/2, 232). Barth criticises the Protestantism which followed Calvin and Luther, the monastic moralism of Western Catholicism, and the Eastern Church, for their reducing the joy of the kingly rule of God. The Gospel, the kingly rule of God, is far more than moral or ethical. The self-revelation of God demonstrated in the acts of the *Royal Man* cannot properly be understood without considering the free grace of God (CD IV/2, 233).

<sup>59</sup> ‘Jesus, das Reich Gottes’ (CD IV/2, 189; KD 210). ‘... Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God are all open to comparison. ... But in Jesus Christ ... we have to do with the eternal basis and temporal fulfilment of the covenant ... . In Him we have their beginning, their meaning, and their goal, the centre which unites and carries the whole, both creation and covenant’ (CD IV/2, 58).

<sup>60</sup> ‘In dieser Hingabe war er das auf Erden gekommene Reich Gottes (“In this sacrifice He [the *Royal Man*] was the kingdom of God brought on earth”)’ (CD IV/2, 184; KD 205).

tion will be further justified as we hear Barth's definite answer to the epistemological question 'how do we know that our exaltation is true and actual?'. According to Barth, our knowledge does not come from Scripture although it is the 'proper' and 'final basis,' neither does it come from Church and its tradition, or from symbols and myths, or from the history of Christian theology, but only from the existence of Jesus Christ, particularly from His resurrection, the noetic event (CD IV/2, 118-153). At this point Barth clearly acknowledges that none of us has sat in the divine counsel (CD IV/2, 119). 'We cannot, therefore, speak *a priori*, but only *retrospectively*' (CD IV/2, 119 ea) of the existence of Jesus Christ (in God's eternal election of grace). The existence of Jesus Christ is the 'normative ground of knowledge.' This means that 'the only source of the knowledge of the eternal will of God is the knowledge of His act fulfilled *in time* ...' (CD IV/2, 119 ea). Indeed 'The classical doctrine of the two natures speaks of the one Jesus Christ, and only in Him. And it does this *a posteriori*, with a reference to Him, to the Son of God actually existing in the flesh. It does not derive from a known *a priori*, a superior possibility, but *only from the given actuality*, from Him Himself' (CD IV/2, 62 ea). Incidentally, it is also important to note that this epistemological question was raised while Barth was discussing the life-act of the *Royal Man*, that is, His identity, the newness (uniqueness) of His life-act, and His life-act as the kingly rule of God itself. In other words, what he means by *a posteriori* christology, the christology 'from below', is this *Royal Man*. So much so, then, that what truly matters is this *a posteriori* christology rather than the *a priori* christology. Namely Barth's christology 'from above' derives from nowhere else but 'from this below'. Again, as we have mentioned in chapter III, section A, what actually enables Barth to begin his christology is this 'from below' element rather than the 'from above' element, albeit he begins methodically with a christology 'from above' which emphasises the 'from above' element of christology.

### 3. The Status of the Humanity of Christ in Christology

Barth deals with the issue of the true humanity of Christ in the course of his emphasis that the origin of the humanity of Christ is His divinity. The humanity of Christ does not exist of itself. The Son of Man exists in virtue of the 'address' (CD IV/2, 84) of the grace of the Son of God Himself to and in the Son of Man. Therefore there is no direct or indirect identification of the two natures other than through their 'effective confrontation (*wirksame Konfrontation*)' (CD IV/2, 87; KD 96). In expressing the union (*Vereinigung*), and not unity (*Einheit*), of the two essences in this way, Barth favours the concept of the *communicatio gratiarum* since this address is consisted in the grace of God - as mentioned already (CD IV/2, 84-104).

Does Barth's understanding of the status (origin) of the humanity of Christ undermine the true humanity of Christ, as Macquarrie would say? What Barth truly has in his mind is not to advocate such as a 'high' christology, but to ensure that humanity itself cannot be the subject of a responsible christology. This is because, again, any general anthropology could otherwise become the subject of a responsible christology. This would imply that God would be replaced by humanity at any time according to its wish and handling. This severe danger is exactly what Barth has fought against throughout his theology in the name of *divine self-revelation*. At the same time, if we are to understand Barth's favourite phrase the *communicatio gratiarum*, then we cannot overlook the statement that 'We must realise that this [the grace both given to Him as man and received by Him as man] can be done only with reference to ... the particular history which took place in Him [the *Royal Man*]' (CD IV/2, 89). What does this mean?

The importance of the humanity in Barth's christology is clearly stated in his introduction to the *Royal Man*. Barth notes that he has 'always envisaged an explanation of this fact [the life-act of the *Royal Man*].'<sup>61</sup> For Barth, the christolo-

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<sup>61</sup> 'eben auf die Erklärung dieses Faktums war es dabei abgesehen.' The English word 'always' is, in the German text, not explicit, but only implicit (CD IV/2, 155 ea; KD 174).



gical starting point is the existence and history of *this Royal Man*. Scripture tells us that God is Lord. He, as such, rules His people and cosmos. However Barth notes that both this envisionment and the statement of the divine dominion is possible 'only in the concrete juxtaposition,'<sup>62</sup> in the person of this *Royal Man*. The *Royal Man* belongs to 'the substance of the whole'<sup>63</sup> christology, and in this view, Barth points out that the older dogmatics was more interested in the divinity of Christ rather than in the humanity. Therefore, according to Barth, responsible christology must give an 'independent consideration'<sup>64</sup> of the humanity of Christ. His humanity occupies the 'central position' (CD IV/2, 156) in the four Gospels, and especially in the Synoptics, as the subject of the declaration: "'Truly this man was the Son of God (Mk 15:39)".' That the life-act of the *Royal Man* is 'the substance' of his whole christology implies two points.

On the one hand, Jesus of Nazareth the *Royal Man*, is completely *like* all humankind. He has a 'human (Adamic) nature,' '*humanitas*,' which is 'flesh' stamped by human sin. He 'is also the creature of God' (CD IV/2, 90). He is 'only one of countless other men' (CD IV/2, 114) as He exists in 'human being (*menschlichem Sein*)' and 'essence (*Wesen*),' and in 'our nature (*unserer Art*)' and 'kind (*Natur*)' (CD IV/2, 50; KD 53). Jesus Christ is the concrete form of a historical relationship between humanity and humanity (CD IV/2, 180). In short, the humanity of Christ is different from us not in kind, nature, or essence, but in degree. As the bearer of this human being He was and is the Mediator and

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<sup>62</sup> '*anders als im konkreten Gegenüber*.' The term 'only' in the English translation is paraphrasing of the German text (CD IV/2, 155; KD 174).

<sup>63</sup> '*geradezu die Substanz des Ganzen*' (CD IV/2, 156; KD 174).

<sup>64</sup> (CD IV/2, 156). Having already mentioned the importance of the humanity in christology, Barth first of all stresses the actual existence of the *Royal Man*: (1) He was present in a way which all people could see and hear. He was absolutely alien and excitingly *novum*. In this respect He was, and made, history (CD IV/2, 156-157); (2) He was present in a way that not only demanded decision from human beings, but He created the need for that choice (CD IV/2, 157-159); (3) He was there in such a way which could not be forgotten (CD IV/2, 159-163); (4) His presence was 'irrevocable' (CD IV/2, 163-166).

Reconciler between God and us.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the Jesus of Nazareth the *Royal Man* is completely *unlike* all humankind. He is '*the*' (CD IV/2, 36) true human being. This complete unlikeness consists in His being the Son of God, in the unlikeness of His humanity and ours (CD IV/2, 27-28). This, particularity in relation to the humanity of Christ, is not a matter of a 'quantitative unlikeness of degree,' *i.e.*, wiser, greater, more pious, stronger, etc., between His particular humanity and ours (CD IV/2, 28). His decisive difference consists in the fact that there took place an exaltation of the humanity. The exaltation means 'the history of the placing of the humanity common to Him and us on a higher level,' distinct from us not only in 'degree' and 'quantity' but 'in principle' and 'quality.'<sup>66</sup> 'This is the secret of the humanity of

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<sup>65</sup> According to Barth, to confirm that the particular Jesus Christ is a true human being like us, is both right and necessary. It is right because it is true. It is necessary to shun every kind of docetic christology. This implies that 'Every sound christological discussion will necessarily start not only with an explanation of the *vere Deus* which declares the equality of Jesus Christ with God, but with an explanation of the *vere homo* which declares His equality with us. It will always have to keep this at the back of its mind, and take it into the strictest account in the later development of the doctrine' (CD IV/2, 25-26). We must be, at this point, clear that this later development is all about the life-act of the *Royal Man*.

<sup>66</sup> (CD IV/2, 28). We may raise the question as to whether Barth is saying that the humanity of Christ is different from us in degree or in kind. But what Barth virtually says is both. This dual statement was the corollary of his christological axiom that Jesus Christ is *vere homo* and *vere Deus*. Namely He had to be distinct from us in kind because He is God, and therefore He is '*the*' human being. But at the same time He had to be different from us in degree, because He truly assumed human flesh, and thus He is 'a' human being. In other words, Jesus' being both like us and unlike us, consists in the fact that He is 'completely like us as a man, He is completely unlike us as the true man' (CD IV/2, 69). He is totally unlike us because His humanity alone is fully determined by the grace of God (CD IV/2, 89), but He is like us as He is accessible and recognisable as our 'Brother' among many brethren.

Here we face a dilemma of theological logic. From a vintage of human logic this dual statement is in fact the limit of Christian dogmatics and theology as a whole. For it is very difficult, from a human point of view, to understand that both a complete God and a complete human being are in one person. So what we could say, in facing the logical impasse, is that, for Barth, theological language is not a scientific language but a doxological language, *viz. fides quaerens intellectum*.

Further, Christ being '*the*' (CD IV/2, 36) true human being has a soteriological significance as well. If this particular Jesus of Nazareth is to be the Saviour or the Reconciler of the whole cosmos, then He has to be '*the*' true human being of all human beings. We could believe in Him alone because all humankind will have a genuine reason for their hope for the recovery of their true humanity, since He is *the* true humanity. If this were not the case there would be no reason for believing in Him alone. As He is *the* true human being, He *strikes* all humankind, and as such has a universal character. In short, He is qualified to be the representative of all kinds of human beings as He is 'the' true human being.

Jesus Christ which has no parallel at all in ours. This is the basis and power of the atonement made in Him on this side - as it is seen from below, from man' (CD IV/2, 28). For the same reason that Jesus is *the* true human being, His humanity is not to be determined by a general anthropology. Rather true humanity must be understood and determined by the humanity of Christ.<sup>67</sup> That is to say, the status of the humanity of Christ stands on the fact that '... He would not be like us at all, but only unlike. Everything depends again upon the fact that in His unity (*Einheit*) with God this man is in full likeness to us, and only in this likeness unlike us, man in a very different way from ourselves' (CD IV/2, 40; KD 43).

#### 4. Understanding the 'Historical' Jesus

If we insist on our contention that, for Barth, the historical life-act of the *Royal Man* is the ground for his christology is correct, we may easily raise the following questions. Why was Barth then uninterested in the question of the historical Jesus? Why did Barth begin and develop his christology in view of the incarnation of the Logos 'from above' instead of beginning and developing his christology upon the 'historical' Jesus?

Let us be clear about this issue. First of all, for Barth, the historicity of Jesus is the *presupposition* of christology. Barth affirms the impossibility of reconstructing the historical Jesus in orderly and biographical way in view of the modern understanding of history. The New Testament presents 'only a fragmentary picture';

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<sup>67</sup> (CD IV/2, 26). 'What human nature is ... can be learned only with and from Him, just as it is only with and from Him, and not from a general concept of deity, that we can learn what God is, and therefore His divine nature' (CD IV/2, 26). Again, for this precise reason of safeguarding christology from becoming a general anthropology, or its becoming the basis of christology, Barth deliberately began his christology with the 'from above' aspect prior to dealing with the 'from below' aspect, even though what he *eventually* kept in mind as a referent of the christology 'from above' was the christology 'from below.' Barth, in fact, deals with anthropology and hamartiology in the light of christology.

it lacks 'external coherence' (CD IV/2, 165). So it is difficult to grasp its historical continuity and inner coherence from a modern historical and biographical point of view. Is Scripture a character sketch then? Barth believes that a real human person is seen and described in the witnesses of the New Testament. But He cannot be generally categorised since it is so singular, unique, and alien. The New Testament tradition could not possibly give us materials for a biography or character study. However, its truth and verity are based upon its 'inner coherence (*innere Einheitlichkeit*)' in spite of its 'external inconsistencies (*äußeren Uneinheitlichkeit*)' (CD IV/2, 193; KD 214-215). This inner coherence is what differentiates these Gospels from other attempts in proving that they were trustworthy and could therefore be used as a rule or canon for the true consideration of the man Jesus. What the Gospel narratives present is the 'totality' of the activity of Jesus from an 'unmistakeable unity of the picture' (CD IV/2, 193). The important thing of the New Testament is that it not only speaks 'about' the *Royal Man*, but also 'from' Him, because, 'As its theme He was also its origin, as its theorem its axiom' (CD IV/2, 166). The New Testament could *attest* (and not prove) Him as a human being. With this view, Barth contends that he has:

presupposed as the 'New Testament' - not naively, but deliberately and consciously - a fixed form of the tradition denoted by this term; not a form which is hypothetical, but one which is as a whole well-known to us historically. We have thus refrained (again deliberately) from any critico-historical construction or reconstruction of this presupposition (CD IV/2, 248).

The issue of 'history' is the subject of a long debate. And yet what Barth means by history is 'actual fact' in time and space. The humanity of Christ accompanies the divinity of Christ throughout the christological movement. It is used as the actual constitution for a responsible christology.

To be sure, the *assumptio carnis* is Barth's overriding emphasis throughout *Church Dogmatics*. But the primary emphasis of Barth is that it is *God* who assumed a humanity. This implies, in relation to the question of history,<sup>68</sup> that not

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<sup>68</sup> We are concerned only with Barth's view of the New Testament, and not with the history of textual criticism or history in general or in particular.

only the Bible, but any modern historian who wishes to sketch the biography of Jesus in view of the modern concept of history, must necessarily fail in its goal. Human beings cannot portray the 'vertical movement'<sup>69</sup> of this particular Jesus Christ. If His life-act were only human, then writers could have written it much more easily in terms of history. But since He presents Himself as God, our attempt to sketch His life-act in terms of our modern concept of history will fail. Therefore, our attempt to present this peculiar life-act historically either in literary or pictorial arts can only be a 'catastrophe.'<sup>70</sup> Barth uncompromisingly presupposes the historical Jesus, and therefore the truth and actuality of our reconciliation based on this historicity of the event of reconciliation. 'To try to grasp it [reconciliation] as supra-historical or non-historical truth is not to grasp it at all. It is indeed truth, but truth actualised in a history and revealed in this way as such - revealed, therefore, as history' (CD IV/1, 157). This premise enables Barth to turn to the Gospel narratives for his argument that the life-act of the *Royal Man* was historically trustworthy.

Then it is doubtful whether Barth was really uninterested in the quest for the historical Jesus. Barth *presumes* that the incarnation and its life-act are *historical* in the sense of its *facticity* in time and space. Thus it is not really necessary to raise the quest for the historical Jesus, or undertake a historical reconstruction of Jesus, in order to verify the trueness of the biblical narratives.<sup>71</sup> As for Barth, human means of description cannot postulate themselves as the last resort for the ascertainment and verification of the truth of the event. This is not only on account of the limit of human reason and language, but also due to the nature of the event itself. In other words, human perception and language are not adequate to perceive and describe the *act of God*, i.e., that which Barth calls the 'vertical movement.'

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<sup>69</sup> 'die vertikale Bewegung' (CD IV/2, 102; KD 113).

<sup>70</sup> (CD IV/2, 102-103). For this reason there can be no question of using the picture of Christ as a means of instruction in the Church (*ibid*).

<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, we may still raise a question that if Barth presumes the historical Jesus, and therefore does as little New Testament research as in fact he does, then is he not, basically, uninterested in the quest for historical Jesus? Has he not all he needs for dogmatic purposes?



However, we here face with a difficult question as to how Barth could develop his christology on the assumption that he is dealing with the historical revelation, Jesus Christ, and yet not allow that revelation to be the object of ordinary historical 'cognition'? How can he say that that particular Jesus Christ is historical event and yet not allow for the use of historical-critical method in theology? For though it is obvious that the historical-critical method itself cannot yield faith in Jesus Christ as the *God-man*, might not the method itself be allowed as a possible means of understanding the 'historical' act of God truly as a 'historical' event? At this point, we note that we are not fundamentally concerned with this question of revelation (divine act) vs. history (human reality) because this question is beyond the scope of our thesis as it has been outlined. Nevertheless, we might possibly outline an answer to the question as follows.

The inadequacy of human language in conveying the revelation is well expressed in Barth's early debate with Adolf von Harnack in 1923. According to Barth, Scripture witnesses to 'genuine' revelation. This means that Scripture does not witness to a somewhat 'concealed religious possibility of man,' but to the 'possibility of God'. Namely, it is *God* who acted under the form of human possibility as 'reality'. In other words, God became a 'human-historical reality' in the 'person of Jesus Christ'. Yet the sheer fact of the *assumptio carnis* by no means entails that this event can be an object of 'human-historical cognition,' insofar as 'this reality,' i.e., the reality of God is involved. For this reason, 'The existence of a Jesus of Nazareth ... which can of course be discovered historically, is not *this* reality'. A word or deed of this Jesus, historically understood, would be nothing other than the realisation of a human possibility, and would not be 'this' reality. The historical reality of Christ, as revelation, is 'not the "historical Jesus" whom all too eager historical research had wanted to lay hold of in disregard of the every warnings made in the [biblical] sources themselves. ... Nor is it, as you [Harnack] said, an imagined Christ but rather ... the Christ who is *witnessed to* as

the risen one.<sup>72</sup> This is the "historic Jesus Christ." To this extent, Barth refers his understanding of revelation to Pauline christology that 'So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer' (2 Corinthians 5:16).

What interests us here is Barth's view of revelation. For Barth, this revelation is not any historically investigatable or identifiable entity, but the act of God. Barth distinguishes revelation from history, seeing that there is no continuity between them. God is God and man is man. Otherwise, there is no 'God' as such, but there would only be divinely disguised humanity or human imagination. What then does Barth mean by revelation in history?

We may get a clearer view of Barth's understanding of revelation in his perception of Scripture. For Barth, Scripture is not the divine word itself, but the words of 'human witnesses' to revelation. Witness is 'not absolutely' identical with the object of its witness. But, at the same time, in this limitation, the Bible 'is simply revelation as it comes to us, mediating and accommodating itself to us' (*CD* I/2, 457-463). When we really obey and listen to its words, then it 'becomes' for us the 'actual presence and event' of revelation. So if we want to understand the Bible as a real witness of divine revelation, we always face the dilemma between the distinction and the unity between witness and the object of witness.

According to Barth, however, we can avoid this dilemma when we do not ignore 'its [revelation's] humanity for the sake of its divinity. We must not ignore it any more than we do the humanity of Jesus Christ Himself. We must study it [the humanity of Christ], for it is here and nowhere that we shall find its divinity' (*CD* I/2, 463). Indeed, Scripture is the human words spoken by specific people at specific times in a specific situation, in a specific language and with a specific intention. To read and expound Scripture historically is, therefore, perfectly legitimate (*CD* I/2, 464). But this legitimacy does not mean that human beings, by historical study, can penetrate to God's word as such. Rather, it means at best that

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<sup>72</sup> *Revelation and Theology. An analysis of the Barth-Harnack correspondence of 1923* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 44-46.

we are 'prepared to listen' and understand and expound. We should not confuse this preparation with the listening.

Are there, then, any 'hermeneutic principles' for interpreting the Bible? What is the source of the hermeneutic teaching? For Barth, the hermeneutic principles do not occur from any considerations on the nature of human language etc., and therefore from general anthropology. There is no such thing as a 'special biblical hermeneutics' because the hermeneutic principles are not dictated by Scripture. The divine Subject of the Bible, *i.e.*, revelation itself alone is the principle of hermeneutics in expounding the Bible (*CD I/2*, 466). For if we accept that it is only by revelation that revelation can be spoken in Scripture, then the scriptural witnesses must itself be attested by what it attests (*CD I/2*, 469). This means that the rule of interpreting the Bible is to understand it 'as a human word in the light of what it says' (*CD I/2*, 466). As such, a 'truly historical' understanding of revelation (Scripture) must correspond to this rule. The 'historical' understanding does not simply mean to study the biblical expressions, the linguistic and factual context of the Bible, or the biblical figures in their historical reality. The best results of such studies would generally be to get a certain clear knowledge of some figures in their concrete state, of their personality and piety in connection with their roles in specific historical circumstances, etc., which of course cannot be despised as something worthless (*CD I/2*, 466-467). The apostle Paul is the example of the fact that Scripture indeed has a very definite humanity expressed in it. But this humanity (historical fact) does not speak of itself, but of God's revelation.

In exegesis, 'the mystery of the sovereign freedom of the substance' alone must summon us to hear the historical revelation, the divine act, which is realised in the historical person of Jesus Christ. In face of this subject-matter there can be no question of our achievement or confident approach which masters the matter; rather, we are mastered by the subject-matter. We *can* investigate the humanity of the word, the historical form of the divine revelation, but we cannot confuse the divine revelation with the biblical words themselves, or with the human quality of

the Bible. Thus the notion that complete impartiality is the most fitting and best disposition for true exegesis is simply 'comical.' To this extent, the fact that the biblical words can be the medium of divine revelation is something peculiar, something which can be understood only in terms of the '*analogia fidei*' (CD I/2, 470-471). Consequently, as far as a proper understanding of the 'divine revelation' in Scripture is concerned, there is no possibility of a 'general hermeneutics,' such as that provided by the 'historical-critical method,' but only this 'special hermeneutics', that is, that the Bible must be interpreted only by the revelatory substance by the biblical words (CD I/2, 472).

What we can see thus far is that Barth's main concern was to safeguard the uniqueness of the divine self-revelation by preventing any identification of with any physical or, indeed, metaphysical reality. Although Barth undoubtedly notes that 'the actualisation of the act of God which took place once and for all in Jesus Christ' (CD I/2, 531), he rejects any simple identification between the divine revelation and Jesus of Nazareth. It is not that this particular Jesus of Nazareth is not *the* historical person in whom God revealed Himself at a particular time and space. Rather, Barth wishes to underline the fact that we know this Jesus as Christ, not because the words and deeds of Jesus tell us so, but because *God* enables us to confess Jesus as 'Christ' and 'Lord'. The story of Jesus cannot be the *scandal* unless God works in it through the work of the Holy Spirit. Barth's primary concern seems to be fundamentally with his *theological axiom* that the divine revelation, which includes the 'moment' of its subjective realisation in human faith (CD I/1, § 12), cannot in any way be identified with or possessed by or fixed in a certain person or reality. God remains God, although God truly revealed Himself in the person of the Jesus of Nazareth. God does not dissolve into the person of Jesus or into any past manifestation in history, but always remains God. In such a way, *revelation is new every moment*. It must also be pointed out that since Barth does affirm Jesus of Nazareth as *the* historical manifestation or as the divine revelation in person, the issue whether or not he was uninterested in the 'historical' Jesus does not seem to crucially undermine our thesis. For if he affirms the

historical reality, then the issue of the historical Jesus would be basically a matter of christological *methodology* rather than of christological *content*, which echoes our previous discussion that, as far as Barth's christology is concerned, epistemology precedes methodology (pp. 45ff.). Again, it seems quite evident that Barth is concerned primarily with the *theological (dogmatic) principle*, that is, that we know and confess the particular Jesus of Nazareth as the 'Lord' and 'Christ' not simply by our knowledge of the historical Jesus narrated in Scripture, but fundamentally by the work of God the Holy Spirit. If God did not reveal Himself, then nothing could be known as divine revelation or as the Word of God at all, not even Jesus of Nazareth or the Bible. If God does not work, the biblical stories are merely past history, incapable of yielding *faith* in Jesus of Nazareth as God-man. This is why Barth is very sceptical about with the historical-critical method.

We might conclude, therefore, that it might be more correct and fair to say that Barth was more concerned with this *theological principle* or *axiom* than that he was not interested in, or that he ignored the importance of, the question of history. The logic of his argument is so concentrated and persistent on *this one aspect*, that he hardly has much room to discuss other aspects. This surely turns out to be both a merit and demerit of his theology; it becomes a merit insofar as Barth's christology is so consistently and thoroughly developed in this way, and it becomes a demerit insofar as his christology consequently lacks the consideration of counter-questions and aspects. Nevertheless, it may be that Barth's revision of his theological outlook in the *Humanity of God* should provide for us the last word and the best possible solution to our problem. For here, he acknowledges that his early view of the divine revelation was *only partly* correct, as in fact we cannot possibly and practically talk of this divine revelation apart from the humanity of God in Jesus of Nazareth. But the revision proposed was never fully developed.



## Summary

We have argued that Barth's christology consists of the two elements, 'from above' and 'from below'. This dual element derives from an understanding of christology in terms of the doctrine of reconciliation, and the exchange of divine incarnation and human exaltation in terms of the *servant as Lord* and *the Lord as servant*. Both are two forms of one event. This dual perception within a single christology implies that responsible christology cannot stand itself on one element or on the other but must stand on both together. This clear cut dual constituency demonstrates, first of all, that it should be highly questionable whether Barth's christology is 'simply' or 'more or less' a christology 'from above' or a 'high' christology as many theologians insist.

As far as the apparent framework of Barth's christology is concerned, it is quite fair to understand Barth's christology as one from both 'above *and* below'. However, our in-depth critique of the content of this framework forces us to go beyond this 'bothness' in our understanding of Barth's christology. According to Barth, the *theologia crucifixionis*, the below christology, is *the* centre of christology since all the christological movement and content, and therefore the gravity of whole christology, lies on this event. Indeed, for Barth, the true meaning of the incarnation, the 'from above' element, is revealed in nowhere but the *theologia crucifixionis*, in the 'from below'. This means, for the purpose of our thesis, that the only responsible ground of christology is this christology 'from below'. The 'high' christology is built on nothing but this 'low' christology. In other words, Barth's christology 'from above' embodies nothing but the christology 'from below'. *The 'high' christology is possible and has its power, only due to this 'low' christology.* To put it differently, *Barth views the divinity of Christ, the incarnation of the Word of God, in and through the humanity of Christ and vice versa.*

But, to be more precise, Barth means by the 'low' christology to highlight the *historical* life-act of the *Royal Man*. This life-act of the *Royal Man* is not merely a predicate of his christology, but rather the Subject of it. The reason is this. By definition, christology is to speak of Jesus Christ. But what He acts and speaks

is that God assumed flesh for the reconciliation of the world to Himself. The central theme of the speech and life-act of Jesus Christ, the *Royal Man*, was the kingly rule of God, reconciliation. This reconciliation is manifested through the *historical* life-act: a revolutionary life-act and, unique miracles aiming at, both the physical and spiritual healing and liberation of people. This historical manifestation implies that reconciliation is not a future event to be waited for but something already realised in some sense here and now. As such, His life-act was itself a *holistic* reconciliation. This holistic reconciliation which is realised in the life-act of the *Royal Man* with the kingly rule of God, is the righteousness of God. And this righteousness of God is Gospel. Here what strikes our mind is this. All the critical phrases, such as the kingly rule of God, and the righteousness of God or Gospel, are about the concepts and realities of 'high' or 'from above', since these will hardly have to do with human possibilities or realities, with the 'from below'. Nevertheless, it is significant to notice that these 'high' concepts and realities are integrated into this *historical* life-act of the *Royal Man*, this 'low' christology. This *Royal Man* is the very content and revelation of these 'high' concepts and realities. In other words, all these crucial concepts and contents are converged only this concrete being, this christology 'from below'. This implies that, for Barth, even the concept such as 'high' or 'from above' does not stand in his christology apart from this 'low' christology. To this specific extent, we may even possibly suppose that his christology could be rather a christology 'from below' or a 'low' christology.

Barth's undeviating emphasis upon the divinity being the Subject of christology, does not indicate a 'high' christology in the sense that it is God who comes 'from above' who dominates in christology, and thus that the humanity is dissolved in it. More specifically, Barth's statement that whereas the humanity of Christ 'is adopted' by the divinity of Christ, the divinity of Christ is 'proper' to christology' by no means undermines the full humanity of Christ, as Macquarrie asserts. Rather, here underlies a fundamental theological axiom which cannot be compromised. This emphasis was necessary for him in order to safeguard christology from becoming merely a general anthropology. Humanity *per se* cannot

be an independent issue or even worthy of consideration for responsible christology. This implies that Mariology cannot be an appropriate subject in christology either. If christology could be discussed in terms of general anthropology, then it would be meaningless to talk of christology, because christology is necessarily concerned with the issue of the reconciliation (salvation) of God with humankind. (Of course Macquarrie's observation to a certain extent vindicates itself if it is singled out from the whole context of Barth's theological insights. But his observation that Barth undermined the full humanity of Jesus Christ and as such espouses a christology 'from above' is highly questionable in the light of Barth's theological context and insights.) Christology deals with the particular existence of the Reconciler - with Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the emphasis is a matter of the clarification of its Subject matter rather than a patroniser of 'high' christology as such.

Indeed, Barth integrates all the elements of 'high' christology into this *historical life-act* of the *Royal Man*, the christology 'from below', and then represents this 'high' christology in terms of this 'low' christology. This *Royal Man* plays the pivotal role in his whole christology. In such a way, it stands in the centre of Barth's christology.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Examining Christology 'from above' in light of Barth's Theological and Christological Paradigm Shift and Re-orientation in 'Natural Theology'

This chapter is designed to examine the tenability of the accusation of 'from above' in light of Barth's theological and christological paradigm shift and his re-orientation towards natural theology. Our consideration of Barth's christology from this aspect is vital since it will prevent us not only from going astray from the train of Barth's christological *Gestalt*, but it will also sift out our pre-conceived ideas (whether right or wrong) about Barth's christology.

#### I. The Paradigm Shift from the Divinity to the Humanity

##### 1. The Change of Christological Direction

We saw that some perceive Barth to be holding a christology 'from above' on account of his affirmation of the 'absolute qualitative difference' between God and humanity. Hence we have to scrutinise whether this reason is sustainable.

First of all, we have to realise that Barth's lecture on *The Humanity of God*,<sup>1</sup> delivered at the meeting of the Swiss Reformed ministers' Association in Aarau on September 25th of 1956, appears to be a *new hermeneutical vista* of his christology. Barth admits that his early theology treated the humanity of God on the periphery rather than in the centre, at the expense of the 'wholly otherness' of God from the world (*HoG* 38). This means that any sound christology must deal with the humanity of Jesus in the centre of christological reflection.

The grave concern of Barth, in the lecture, is to derive the knowledge of the humanity of God from the knowledge of His divinity. Barth recognises that his emphasis on the *wholly otherness of God* had been triggered in order to challenge the tendencies of anthropocentric and religionistic understandings of God in the nineteenth until the early twentieth century (*HoG* 39). The theme of theological studies was human piety and culture instead of divine grace and freedom. The

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter *HoG*.

Christian God was replaced by the Christian religious man. To speak of God meant to speak of human revelations, wonders, faith, and works. Consequently, God the Creator, the Lord, and the Reconciler was reduced merely to a notion of piety. The issue, according to Barth, is that the theme of Scripture is not one of human religions or religious moralities nor its own secret divinities. The theme of Scripture is the absolutely unique act of *God* in relating Himself to humankind. Therefore the *otherness of God* was necessary lest He be understood as confined to, or even dissolved into, the *Christian religious self-consciousness* (HoG 39-41). Accordingly the early theology had a 'critical' and 'polemic' character (HoG 38). To this extent Barth's discussion about *The Humanity of God* is a matter of a 'genuine revision (*Retraktation*)' (HoG 41) of the divinity of God. This revision involves a new beginning in terms of a better and fuller understanding of the early theology.

Barth admits that his early views of *wholly other, perpendicular breaking in from above, infinite qualitative difference, the vacuum, the mathematical point, the tangent*, and *the Scripture's only one theological interest*, namely the immediate forgiveness of sin from above downwards, are only partially right (HoG 42-43). He affirms his mistake that he absolutised, abstracted, and set God over against humankind, and in such a way that the Christian God has greater similarity to the god of philosophers rather than to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (HoG 45). This eventual mistake was occasioned by the fact that the new knowledge of revelation was too exciting to be handled in a totally right way at the time (HoG 44).

Having noticed the early mistake, Barth asserts that the true meaning and power of the deity of the living God is found in His 'dialogue' and '*togetherness with humanity*'. God is not a divine 'being-for-Himself' but exists as a '*partner*' of humanity (HoG 45). This implies that the true God cannot be thought of apart from His being for humanity. 'It is precisely God's *deity* which, rightly understood, includes his *humanity*.' In sum what Barth means by the *Humanity of God* is 'His free affirmation of man, His free concern for him, His free substitution for him' (HoG 51).



## 2. The Particular Jesus of Nazareth as the Only Epistemological Content and Ground for the Humanity of God

Barth asks how we know that the true deity embraces the humanity? In his view, the only epistemological ground for the knowledge of the humanity of God is Jesus Christ. We know that we are not dealing with God *in abstracto*, nor with humanity, and neither are we dealing with an inhuman God, in virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ is *vere Deus vere homo*. In Him, humanity and God are not in isolation, but meet together and are together. These two natures of Jesus Christ constitute the *mutuality* of the divine covenant: humanity's loyal partner as true God, and God's loyal partner as true humanity. This mutuality establishes the skeleton of christological movement (content): the humiliated Lord and the exalted Servant; the Word spoken from the loftiest transcendence and the Word heard in the lowest immanence. In this oneness of Jesus Christ, we affirm that God is the Mediator and the Reconciler between Himself and humanity, the Guarantor of God's free grace and humanity's free gratitude, and the realisation of the justice of humanity before God, and as such the Kingly Rule of God. Moreover, exactly in this way it is Jesus Christ who makes known<sup>2</sup> that He is also the 'Revealer' of His being both the Mediator and the Reconciler. Viewed in this way, the humanity of God is nothing but a 'Christological statement' (HoG 47).

What does Barth mean when he says that 'the question [of who and what God is] must be, who and what is God *in Jesus Christ*, if we here today would push forward to a better answer' (HoG 47)? Does this statement not see Jesus Christ as being *the* epistemic ground for a responsible and appropriate talk of God? That is to say, 'It is when we look at Jesus Christ that we know decisively that God's deity does not exclude, but include, His *humanity*.'<sup>3</sup> So Jüngel aptly states

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<sup>2</sup> (HoG 46-47). 'How the freedom of God is constituted, in what character He is the Creator and Lord of all things, ... we must always learn from Jesus Christ' (CD IV/1, 129).

<sup>3</sup> (HoG 49). 'His deity *encloses humanity in itself*. ... It would be the false deity of a false God if in His deity His humanity did not also immediately encounter us' (*ibid.*, 50).

that Barth's theology is based on the actuality 'at least cognitively.'<sup>4</sup> Does Barth's new understanding of the issue of the 'otherness of God' not after all nullify Macquarrie's assertion and therefore nullify the label 'from above'? He seems to find difficulty accepting the clear cut statement of Barth instead of problematising and suspecting it in accordance with his own impression. It is questionable therefore whether Macquarrie's assertion would not be considered a christological eisegesis or a theological postulation.

## **II. Against an Ambiguous 'Logos Christology': The Election of the *Humanity* of Christ as the Genuine Beginning and Content of Christology**

We saw that Barth understands the exaltation of the Son of Man as the christological movement 'from below'. But an important thing is that, for Barth, the doctrine of the election of grace is the theological ground for this christology 'from below'. This implies that as far as the genuine beginning and the actual content of christology is concerned, Barth's christology works significantly 'from below' as well as 'from above'. The reason is this.

According to Barth, the particular Jesus of Nazareth is both the Subject and the object of the election of grace, namely, He is not only the elected human being (Eph 1:4) (*CD* II/2, 116-123), but He is also the electing God (Jn 1:1-4) (*CD* II/2, 94-115).<sup>5</sup> What tells us, after all, that Jesus Christ's is both the Elector and the elect is that God ascribed the election to all human beings and the reprobation to the humanity of Christ (*CD* II/2, 163). That is to say, the election of grace means

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<sup>4</sup> Jüngel, 'The World as Possibility and Actuality' [1972<sup>2</sup>] in: *Theological Essays*, [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989<sup>2</sup>], p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> This twofold view unveils Barth's christology as being a trinitarian one. There was the choice of the Father to give up the Son, the choice of the Son to be obedient to the Father, and the resolve of the Holy Spirit not to be 'isolated from' this decision of election (*CD* II/2, 101).

the rejection of the elected Son and the election of humankind. No human being is rejected other than the man, Jesus. The crucifixion is the actualization and concretisation of the execution of this merciful exchange. In other words, the election of grace means the merciful exchange of the humiliation (crucifixion) of the Son of God and the exaltation (resurrection) of the Son of Man. Hence the doctrine of predestination is nothing other than the doctrine of the election of *grace*. As such the doctrine of election stands for 'the sum'<sup>6</sup> of the Gospel.

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<sup>6</sup> 'It is in Him [the particular Jesus of Nazareth] that we see this exchange. For He is both [the electing God and the elected human being] . ... He is God's eternal, twofold predestination, from which everything else, all God's other purposes and therefore all occurrences, proceed, and in which all things have their norm and end' (CD IV/2, 32).

Thus to believe and to talk about divine predestination means faith in the *non*-rejection of humankind (CD II/2, 164). Obviously this is a challenge to John Calvin's understanding of the 'double predestination' as the 'dreadful decree' (*Christian Institutes*, III.xxiii.7) (=Inst) which was originated by Augustine: 'God has elected some to save and rejected some to perish for eternity' (Augustine, 'To Simplician - On Various Questions. Book 1 [395-396]' in: *Augustine: Earlier Writings* [1953], pp. 388-391, 395); For Calvin's justification of the 'double predestination' as the 'dreadful decree' in view of the biblical references see (Inst., III.xxx.5).

One of Barth's initial aims in his argument over the doctrine of election is to oppose this double decree (Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God: Dogmatics Vol. I*, trans. Olive Wyon, [London: Lutterworth Press, 1949=1946], p. 348).

We see a hermeneutic conflict between Calvin and Barth with regard to the 'double predestination.' Both Calvin and Barth hold Jesus to be the '*speculum electionis*' (Inst., III.xxx.5; CD II/2, 64-65, 60, 96-98). But the content of their understandings differ from each other even though they refer to the same Scripture.

Calvin maintains, presupposing that Jesus Christ is the 'supreme Judge and Master' (Inst., III.xxii.7) as He is both the 'Mediator' and the 'author' of election (Jn 13:18) (Inst., III.xxii.8), the double election, an election for some and the rejection of others, in reference to the 'sayings of Jesus' (Jn 6:37, 39, 44-45, 65; 17:6, 9, 11-12; esp. Matt 15:13). This double predestination is even more strengthened by Romans 9:13-18, Ephesians 1:3-4, and by the texts: 1 John 2:19; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:22 (Inst., III.xx.7,10,11,13). The 'little flock' (Lk 12:32) represents the elected people, namely, they are the people to whom 'the knowledge of the secret of the kingdom of heaven have been given' (Matt 13:11), and of whom 'God foreknew' (Rom 8:29) (Inst., III.xx.10). Moreover Calvin confirms his view of the double predestination by emphasising that the divine election for some is purely His grace, namely, the election is the election of the unmerited people (2 Tim 1:9; Rom 9:15-16; Jn 15:16) (Inst., III.xxii.2).

While Barth interprets the doctrine of election in terms of the three biblical references: John 1:1-3, Ephesians 1:42, and 2 Corinthians 1:18-20. Particularly 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 is the hermeneutical key to resolving the problem of double decree for Barth. In view of 2 Corinthians, the message of Romans 9-11 is understood as the divine *Yes* and not the combination of both *Yes* and *No*. In other words, ultimately the election means only *Yes* to human beings. The word *πρόθεσις* (used in Rom 8:29, 9:11; Eph 1:11) re-ascertains this divine *Yes*. The unity of the divine essence does not have such a parallelism of election and rejection. Otherwise the 'good-news' would be nothing but the 'bad-news'. In this view, Barth asserts that Calvin's 'double predestination' is

Here the subject of our thesis comes to expression. By definition, christology is human being's speaking of the being and act of the particular Jesus of Nazareth. So it is very natural to have various christologies according to different understandings in terms of interests, aspects, and emphases in all ages. Nevertheless if we concede that the true value of our speaking of Jesus Christ in terms of 'christology' is due to His work of *reconciliation* (salvation), then we must trace our christology back to the doctrine of the election of grace. In other words, if we assent that the primary message of the being and act of Jesus Christ is *good-news*, christology will have to refer back to the election of grace. This election of grace is not only the very *beginning* of this good-news (CD IV/2, 33), but is also the very *content* of this

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merely a 'speculation' (CD II/2, 13-18). Seeing Jesus as the electing God Himself, the passage 'For he chose us in him [Jesus] before the creation' (Eph 1:4) rather re-emphasises the election as the Gospel, divine *Yes* (CD II/2, 66-67).

Here we find some interesting points. *Firstly*, both Calvin and Barth chose not to be speculative or biblicist in dealing with the issue of election (*Inst.*, III.xxi.2-3; xxiii.2; xxiv.4; CD II/2, 52). Yet Barth accused Calvin of being 'speculative' in this matter (CD II/2, 18). *Secondly*, whereas for Calvin the prayers and the 'sayings of Jesus' are the authentic ground for the double decree, Barth subordinates them to the fact that Jesus Himself is the electing God (Jn 1:1-3, 17:10, 14:1b, 10, 4:34, 14:10, 3:35, 17:2, 6:45b, 44, 37 etc.) (CD II/2, 106). While Calvin refers the doctrine of predestination to the 'sayings of Jesus' which apparently speak of both election and rejection, Barth primarily refers it to Paul (2 Cor 1:18-20) and John's (Jn 1:1-3, 14) interpretations of Jesus, which talk of the divine *Yes* to humankind and of Jesus being God Himself. Having taken a different hermeneutical perspective, whilst Calvin counts the phrase 'in him [Jesus] (Eph 1:4) as having an exclusive meaning (*No*), Barth holds the phrase as having an inclusive meaning (*Yes*). This resulted in Calvin's insistence upon the double decree on the basis of literal interpretation, and in Barth's determination to abandon this 'dreadful decree' on the basis of Paul and John's interpretations of the election. *Thirdly*, Calvin does not mention John 1:1-3 at all, which plays such a significant role in Barth's understanding of double predestination. So Barth charges Calvin with not taking Jesus as the electing God Himself. This implies, *fourthly*, whereas Calvin interprets the doctrine of double predestination from what the *incarnated* Jesus (post-existence of Jesus) says, Barth interprets the double predestination in view of the *pre-existence* of the humanity of Jesus. Namely, for Barth, the double predestination means that God has elected the pre-existed humanity of Christ, in whom all human beings are elected, and at the same time God has rejected Him on behalf of the death of all human beings, which is revealed in the crucifixion of the post-existence of Jesus.

According to Balthasar, as the election of grace is '*summa evangelii*,' the election is the 'heart-beat of Barth's theology ... the key to understanding God's whole Revelation in creation, reconciliation, and redemption' (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* [1971], p. 156); Seeing the election in such a way, 'man can only gain, God can only lose.' After all the 'triumph of grace' is a 'triumph of losing' (G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Michigan: Eerdmans, 1956], pp. 105, 107).

good-news as it declares the unconditional election of God for all human beings. As the election of grace manifests itself to be the beginning as well as the content of the good-news in such a way that the election is the *antecedent* event of the *humanity* of Christ, then precisely speaking, *Barth's christology begins with the election of this humanity of Christ* in spite of the fact that the context of christology is the doctrine of God. That is why Barth states that the election of grace is the 'eternal beginning' (CD IV/2, 31) of all the discussions about christology. This christological commencement, with regard to our thesis, suggests that to mark Barth's christology as one 'from above', with a view to the fact that he bases it on the 'Logos christology', the incarnation from the pre-existent Logos 'from above', is not entirely accurate. The 'good-news', which is *the* message of the christology overall, had *already begun* and *had been actualized within* God Himself even *before* the incarnation 'from above'. In fact, since Barth's christological beginning and content is worked out *within* the Godhead *before* the creation, then it might be more proper to characterise his christology as one 'from within' or 'from before' than as one 'from above'.

This christology 'from above' becomes a different matter when it is put in a dogmatic setting: 'what does it say after all?' At this juncture we need to remember what the message of the exaltation of the Son of Man, the christology 'from below', was.

As we have seen, for Barth, the earthly life-act of the *Royal Man* was the revelation of the kingly rule of God. The first and final message of this kingly rule of God was the proclamation of the *justification* of *unjustifiable* and *unworthy*<sup>7</sup> human beings. The proclamation of such an impossible and unmerited justification was the righteousness of God, that is, the good-news. At the same time we could also see that for Barth the election of the humanity of Christ was 'the sum' of the Gospel. In other words, since God in His grace has chosen all humankind in the

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<sup>7</sup> Is 1:2, 4; 30:1, 9; Jer 3:21f.; Hos 11:2; Mal 1:6 (CD IV/1, 171).



election of the humanity of Christ even before the creation, the election is valid for all humankind *irrespective* of their recognition and confession of it. This irrespectability of the election of grace is beyond human understanding and, as such, is a mystery. At this point it is important to note that for Barth the historical life-act of Christ, the christology 'from below', is the concrete and specific description of this election of grace. In such a way both the election of grace and the life-act of the *Royal Man qualitatively correspond* to each other in terms of their prime and conclusive content.<sup>8</sup> But this qualitative correspondence does not mean that Barth's christology could be understood easily by either means: either from the view of the election of grace or from the view of the life-act of Jesus Christ. Rather this correspondence is to say that, after all, either the christology 'from above', 'from within', or 'from before' are about this 'from below', this specific election of the *humanity* of Christ. For, insofar as Barth's *christology*, and not Theology, is concerned, the humanity of Christ is posited as the *actual substance* in terms of his *christological* commencement and content.

Certainly, since the election of the humanity of Christ and the life-act of Jesus Christ was worked out within the Godhead from all eternity, we may also say that the christology 'from eternity' or 'from within' interpret the christology 'from below' and not *vice versa*. In other words, for Barth the christology of *meaning-exposition*, the christology 'from above', may be antecedent to the christology of *content-exposition*, the christology 'from below'. But we must not overlook the fact that Barth's recognition of this theological context came into being not because the doctrine of election dictates it to us, but because the particular life-act of Jesus *lived* this on earth, 'from below'. This observation becomes evident when we see his christology standing firmly in the *historical life-act* of the *Royal Man*, the *content-exposition* of christology. Otherwise christology will be merely a human

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<sup>8</sup> This qualitative correspondence is what Barth means when he says that the election is not a 'contingent fact of history (*zufällige Geschichtstatsache*)' but the 'historical event (*geschichtliche Ereignis*)' (CD IV/2, 31; KD IV/2, 32).

speculation which could have nothing to do with the christology of Scripture and of the Church (CD IV/1-3). Of course it is the Son of God who is elected Son of Man, but by understanding the elected Son of Man as the electing God Himself in terms of the Trinity, Barth emphasises the true relevance of the election of God and its unfailing validity on account of *this manhood*<sup>9</sup> of Jesus Christ. In short, as Barth sees a clear correspondence between the election of the humanity of Christ and this life-act of Jesus the *Royal Man*, we will have to say rather, that Barth's christology begins with the christology 'from below' rather than the ambiguous 'Logos christology', the christology 'from above', because his christology begins *precisely* with the *humanity* of Christ.

### III. Disclosing a New Horizon for the *Theologia Naturalis*

In our previous analysis we saw that some theologians characterised Barth's christology as one 'from above' on account of his rejection of the *theologia naturalis*. For them, Barth's christology is one 'from above' because he admits 'no way from man to God, no natural theology' in spite of his approval of 'some affinity' between God and humanity when he revises the 'absolute qualitative difference' between them in terms of *The Humanity of God*.<sup>10</sup>

But the above description of the reason for labelling a 'high' christology

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<sup>9</sup> A question arises as to 'what stage?' of the humanity of Christ. Barth is not clear about this. But as a corollary of our contention, we are more likely to understand his view as an 'adult stage' of the humanity of Christ. Our stance will certainly have a problematic implication that Barth therefore has a 'mythological christology'. According to Macquarrie, the personal pre-existence of Jesus in 'heaven' is not only mythological, but it is also destructive of his true humanity (Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 57). Similarly, Mascall argues: 'It is the axiom that, whatever the Church and its greatest thinkers may have thought throughout the ages, it is impossible for the Son of God to be on the one hand divine and pre-existent and on the other to have really become man' (Mascall, *Theology and Gospel of Christ. An Essay in Reorientation* 126).

<sup>10</sup> Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* 284; cf. Jenson, *God after God* 71.

invokes a question: what has the issue of natural theology to do specifically with the christological issue 'from above' or 'from below', for natural theology is concerned primarily with human understanding of God, Theology, and not Jesus Christ, christology?

It is true that Barth's theology of revelation rejected any possibility of human knowledge of God in, and through, nature too, *viz.* 'from below', asserting that divine self-revelation 'from above' alone makes its knowledge possible. But, as we have noted already, we must remember Barth's clear cut statement that this issue of God is the issue of Jesus Christ, christology. Moreover, for Barth, the doctrine of God is fundamentally the explication of revelation. And this revelation is the Word of God, Jesus Christ. A legitimacy of dealing with the issue of natural theology in conjunction with our thesis is perhaps well indicated in Barth's argument below: 1) There is no 'general revelation' in nature, conscience, and in history, since the scriptural revelation is the sole norm of human knowledge of God, and source of human salvation, because there is one complete revelation in Christ and not one in general or a particular one; 2) There is no grace of creation and preservation active from the creatures, as Christ is the exclusive saving grace of God, otherwise we will have to acknowledge more than one grace of Christ; 3) There is no natural law from creatures in which humankind could recognise the will of God, which is normative of human action.<sup>11</sup>

What strikes us in these three points is that, for Barth, the issue of natural theology emerges because of christology. The ability to know God becomes an issue because Jesus Christ, and thus christology, claims to be the complete revelation of God Himself. Hence it is eligible to deal with Barth's view of natural theology in our thesis.

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<sup>11</sup> *Natural Theology* Comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Prof. Emil Brunner and the reply 'No' by Karl Barth (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Century Press, 1956 [=1946]), pp. 20-21. Trans. Peter Fraenkel from: *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag), 1934. (=NaTheol)

### 1. Karl Barth the 'Anti Natural Theologian'

In view of Barth's theological axiom, his theology is characterised as a 'theology of revelation'. By definition, revelation theology means that humankind can know, and therefore speak of true God only when God reveals Himself. In other words, human beings cannot know the true Word of God, Jesus Christ, on the basis of nature unless the true Word addresses itself to human beings. This so-called 'revelation theology' is dealt with particularly in Barth's *Doctrine of the Word of God* (CD I/1-2) and *The Doctrine of God* (CD II/1-2) with great intensity and systematisation. These two doctrines are *de facto* a detailed exposition of this theological axiom. The point is presented most sharply, however, in the debate with Emil Brunner in natural theology (*NaTheol* 1-128). We will confine our comments to the latter for our present purpose.

Barth's discussion of natural theology consists of six main contentions: (1) Humanity's *imago Dei* is entirely obliterated by its sin; (2) 'General revelation' of God in nature, in the conscience, and in history, is to be rejected since scriptural revelation is the sole norm of human knowledge of God and the exclusive source of human salvation, because there is only one complete revelation in Christ and not one general and one special. Scriptural revelation alone is the norm of human knowledge of God; (3) There is no grace of creation and of preservation active within the creation of the world because Christ is the only saving grace of God; otherwise we would have to acknowledge more than one grace of Christ; (4) There is no *lex naturae* from creation in which humanity could recognise the will of God which is normative of human action. There is no such natural law which can be introduced into Christian theology as God's order of preservation; (5) Humanity does not have a 'point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*)' for the saving action of God. If it had, then this would contradict the exclusive activity of the grace of Christ; (6) The new creation is not a perfection of the old, but a replacement of the old by the new which comes exclusively into being from without (*NaTheol* 20-21). What interests us the most for our thesis is the second issue.

According to Brunner, there is 'general revelation' in nature, in the

conscience, and in history. The world is the creation of God and He is known by all His works. Needless to say, Scripture does expect believers to participate in the praise of God through general revelation. God leaves the 'imprint (*Stempel*)' of His nature upon whatever He does. Hence the creation of the world is at the same time 'a revelation, a self-communication of God.'<sup>12</sup> Nowhere does Scripture say that human sin has *destroyed* the knowledge of God in His works, although it is true to say that the knowledge of God is affected by sin.

The same is true of what is called 'conscience,' *i.e.* the consciousness of responsibility. Human beings can sin only because they somehow know the will of God. A being which does not know the law of God would not be able to sin. 'The knowledge of the law of God is somehow also knowledge of God' (*NaTheol* 25). 'The difficult question is therefore not whether there are two kinds of revelation. ... The question is rather how the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ, are related' (*NaTheol* 26). At the same time, however, Brunner underlines the fact that this revelation in creation is not sufficient for humankind to know God in such a way that this knowledge brings salvation. Referring to Paul, he notes that sin makes humanity dull, so that it 'misrepresents the revelation of God in creation and turns it into idols.' Yet in faith, humanity is able to speak of a 'double revelation: of one in creation' (*NaTheol* 26), but since faith is awakened by Jesus Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself far surpasses the revelation obtained in the faith of humanity. Further, the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself points to a third revelation, the 'beatific vision,'<sup>13</sup> which is totally different from Himself and yet confers upon His direct revelation its ineffable perfection.

This means that the word 'natural' is to be understood in a double sense: an 'objective-divine' and a 'subjective-human-sinful' (*NaTheol* 27). In other words,

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<sup>12</sup> (*NaTheol* 25; *Natur und Gnade* 12). It is important to notice that Brunner's 'revelation, *i.e.* self-communication' has no virtual difference from Barth's 'free communication of Jesus Christ,' *i.e.*, 'revelations' or 'words' or 'lights.' Our notice becomes clear throughout the section III. *Disclosing a New Horizon for the Theologia Naturalis*.

<sup>13</sup> 'das Schauen von Angesicht zu Angesicht' which literally renders as 'The vision from face to face' (Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth* [Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1935<sup>2</sup>], p. 14). (= *Natur und Gnade* 14)



the word 'nature' can be applied in two ways: the 'permanent capacity' for revelation as God has bestowed upon his works, and what sinful humanity makes of this in its ignorant knowledge. God has implanted an image of Himself in humanity; indestructible, and yet always obscured by sin. God did not leave humanity and nature without witness; He is concerned for them who live outside the sphere of special revelation. Nevertheless, Brunner concludes: 'Only the Christian, *i.e.* the man who stands within the revelation in Christ, has the true knowledge of God' (*NaTheol* 27).

Facing Brunner's repudiation, Barth clearly puts his standpoint over against Brunner's. According to Barth, Brunner's view is nothing but a classical example of a 'theology of compromise' (*NaTheol* 69). By the '*theologia naturalis*' Barth means every positive or negative '*formulation of a system*' which claims to interpret divine revelation, whose '*subject*,' however, differs from the revelation in Jesus Christ, and whose '*method*' thus differs equally from the exposition of Holy Scripture (*NaTheol* 74-75). Unfortunately, according to Barth, such a natural theology is seen in Brunner's approach. The latter's viewpoint amounts to a 'fatal mistake,' because, the so-called '*theologia naturalis*' cannot be an independent subject within real theology. To reject natural theology means not to admit it as a separate problem in theology. The rejection of natural theology comes about through nothing less than fear of God, and results in what can only be a complete *lack* of interest in this matter. If natural theology is allowed to become of interest, then one's approach is no longer centred upon the true basis of all Christian theology in Jesus Christ. It is by this acceptance or rejection that truth is known, the Gospel is expounded, God is praised, and the Church is built.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> (*NaTheol* 74-77). 'Natural theology is always the answer to a question which is false if it wishes to be "decisive".' For the issue of natural theology is a 'quite secondary' and '*unimportant*' question. 'Only the theology and the church of the antichrist can profit from it' (*ibid.*, 128). Barth's contention is fair enough, especially when we see this argument in connection with his uncompromising theological canon that 'human beings can know God only when He reveals Himself'. Yet our counter question is whether Barth does not, by implication, limit God within the category of His direct revelation. If our counter question is legitimate, Barth's view would be a contradiction to his argument that the Word of God is spoken through true words, in and through the natural events, as the noetic power of the resurrection is too great to be imprisoned within the witnesses

Barth, having thus defined the concept of 'natural theology' and its theological locus, tackles Brunner's view. Brunner argues that the world is 'somehow recognisable' to humanity as the creation of God, that 'humankind somehow know the will of God.' 'The creation of the world is at the same time revelation, self-communication of God' (*NaTheol* 25). Hence real knowledge of God through creation does happen without special revelation, though only 'somehow' and 'not in all its magnitude.' The true triune God is known by all humankind without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, even though human knowledge is distorted and dimmed by its sin so that God is 'misrepresented' and 'turned into idols.' There are two kinds of revelation, but both reveal the one true God.<sup>15</sup> Only in this affirmation can it be asked 'how the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ, are related' (*NaTheol* 26).

Here Barth asks whether Brunner's view that human knowledge of God is 'somehow' darkly and dimly distorted makes sense. Is it, for example, Brunner's opinion that idolatry is but a somewhat imperfect preparatory stage of the service of the true God? Moreover, Barth is not sure at all if Brunner can consistently maintain that this real knowledge of the true God does not bring salvation. Also, how can Brunner insist on the 'entire loss' of the 'material' *imago Dei*<sup>16</sup> if

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of the sphere of the Bible and the Church alone.

<sup>15</sup> This last sentence requires a clarification as this may mislead readers to believe that Brunner treated the two on the equal level. What Brunner meant by the revelation in the creation is not the revelation of God Himself in Jesus Christ. It is only the 'imprint (*Stempel*)' of God Himself. Our clarification is vindicated as Brunner clearly states that 'The difficult question is ... not whether there are two kinds of revelation. ... The question is rather how the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ, are related' (*NaTheol* 26).

<sup>16</sup> Brunner disagreed with Barth about the *imago Dei* by distinguishing it in terms of 'formal' and 'material' *imago Dei*. According to Brunner, the 'formal' side of the *imago Dei* is still maintained in humanity, albeit the 'material' side of the *imago Dei* is abolished by sin. The reason for the maintenance of the formal side lies in humanity still being the *subject*, the rational being of all creation, and in its *responsibility* (*NaTheol* 22-24).

However, according to Barth, Brunner's disagreement means nothing except humanity's 'likeness to God' is undestroyed, and this undestroyed formal likeness to God is the objective possibility of the revelation of God. As for Barth's understanding, what matters for Brunner is the *humanum*, its rationality and responsibility which is not demolished by sin, since humanity is humanity even though it sins. However, Barth asks if this means that humanity's reason is more 'suited' for defining the nature of God than anything else in the world. Barth understands Brunner as affirming this point. The problem with this affirmative impression lies in Brunner's contradictory

humanity 'somehow' knows the true God from His creation? Barth even wonders whether Brunner did not add something, a practically-proved-ability to know God in a way which is relevant to salvation, to the human 'capacity for revelation (*Offenbarungsmächtigkeit*).<sup>17</sup> If so, this would counter Brunner's confession of the Reformers' doctrines of original sin, justification, and Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

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acknowledgement that 'humanity of itself can do nothing for its salvation' (*ibid.*, 79). Further, if Brunner truly meant that 'Materially the *imago* is completely lost, ... and there is nothing in him which is not defiled by sin,' what does he mean by the 'capacity for revelation'? - Incidentally, while Brunner uses the word '*Wortmächtigkeit* (capacity for words or speech),' Barth understands it as the '*Offenbarungsmächtigkeit* (capacity for revelation).' How can the assertion of this fact serve at all to make revelation something more than divine grace? Barth is not in the least convinced if Brunner could reconcile the above view with his unconditional acceptance of the Reformer's principle *sola scriptura-sola gratia* without a contradiction (*ibid.*, 79-80).

Importantly enough, here we notice a different understanding of the *sola-gratia* between Brunner and Barth. For Brunner, the sole grace is such because God *preserves* the 'formal' *imago Dei* in humanity *notwithstanding* its entire loss of the 'material' *imago Dei*. For Barth however, the sole grace is such because God *creates* human capacity for revelation. If this were not so humanity would have no way to have true knowledge of Him. That is to say, whereas Brunner appropriates the *sola-gratia* in view of God's 'imprinting' or 'leaving' capacity for revelation in humanity, Barth appropriates the *sola-gratia* by focusing on God's act of 'new creation' of human capacity for revelation.

<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, Barth asserts that Brunner distorted the Roman Catholic and Calvinistic perception of the *theologia naturalis*. Brunner's assertion that '[In Roman Catholic theology] the *theologia naturalis* is derived from reason alone' by which nature is entirely comprehensible and accessible, is wrong, because Barth sees that in Roman Catholic theology, reason is left entirely sick and incapable of any serious theological activities without grace. Reason serves to produce theological activities only when it is illumined, or at least provisionally illumined, by faith. Also, Barth believes that Brunner has a false idea of the evangelical and reformed doctrine of the *theologia naturalis*. This false idea is due to Brunner's insufficient appreciation, and one-sided perception, of Luther and Calvin. Barth articulates that a "true" *theologia naturalis* can exist only where man's eyes have been opened by Christ' (*NaTheol* 95-97).

Brecher sees the reason for Barth's rejection of natural theology in his understanding of Anselm. According to Brecher, Barth had to incline natural theology because he indulged so much in Anselm's overriding emphasis on faith in conjunction with reason: 'For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Isaiah vii 9]' (*Proslogion* I, p. 115). Belief in, or conversion to, God is entirely a matter of faith and not reason. Rational assent to Christian tenets can be given only after the appropriate 'leap of faith' (Kierkegaard's idea). So all theologians can do is *to present* what they take to be the case (Brecher, *Anselm's Argument* 44-45).

## 2. *Disclosing a New Horizon for the Theologia Naturalis*

Our analysis thus far clearly shows Barth's straightforward rejection of natural theology not only in its possibility but also in its actuality. This firm dismissal may perhaps justify the attempt of theologians to understand him as the champion of 'anti-natural theologians'.

It is, however, important to recognise that Barth opens up new insights into the issue of natural theology in the context of his christology, for he resumed the discussion some three decades later in the context of *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*. By dealing with the issue of natural theology again in the context of christology, Barth shows his theological consistency, for his early emphasis was that the issue of natural theology cannot be dealt with as an independent theological topic, but only as secondary to, or as a part of, christology.

To be specific, Barth returns to the question of natural theology in the third volume of his christology (CD IV/3.2, 97-164) in which the *propheticum officium* of christology is dealt with under the heading *Jesus Christ, the True Witness*. Barth's overriding emphasis of this section is that the reconciliation not only happened, but that it also *speaks for itself* throughout the ages. This self-communication is demonstrated through the *noetic* event, the resurrection. As the actuality of the reconciliation is made known to humankind by Jesus Himself, humanity can neither excuse itself of its ignorance of the actuality of the reconciliation nor can it nullify it. As such, Jesus Christ is the true Witness and therefore the Victor in this constant battle between human denial and divine affirmation. To understand Barth's new insight into natural theology in a larger perspective, this overriding emphasis appears in the context of the contention that 'true words,' that is 'the self-communication of Jesus Christ,' not only exist, but they are also spoken in and through the secular events outside the Scripture and the Church. To see the context of Barth's retrieval of this issue of natural theology in a narrower perspective, the issue was recounted while he was explaining the implicit meaning of the exclusive confession that 'Jesus Christ is *the* one true Word of God' under the subsection *Jesus is Victor*.

The implicit aspect of the confession is that in Scripture Jesus Christ declares Himself to be the one Word of God, but the Bible as such is not the one Word of God. The activity of the Church, its doctrine and instruction, and its worship is to make Him known as the one Word of God. Also there are many histories, gifts and operations of Jesus Christ determined in individuals or in groups by Him. Yet this exclusive statement does not mean that in them there are no other words which are not notable in their way (CD IV/3.1, 97-98). In stating this, Barth effectively acknowledges the legitimacy of one of the major issues of natural theology which he had previously rejected. This acknowledgement becomes clearer when he affirms *the existence of other words* by discussing their *relationship* to the one Word of God (CD IV/3.1, 110). According to Barth, true words may also be spoken *extra muros ecclesiae*.<sup>18</sup> There are two kinds of words alongside the *one* Word: Scripture and the Church, and words spoken outside Scripture and the Church.<sup>19</sup> What is of greatest interest here is the acknowledgment that there are true words spoken outside Scripture and the Church.

According to Barth, there really *are* true words spoken outside Scripture and the Church which are to be 'regarded as true words'<sup>20</sup> in relation to the one Word of God. *As Jesus Christ does speak through the medium of such words*, the Christian community which lives by the one Word '*not only may but must accept* the fact that there are such words and that it must hear them too'<sup>21</sup> notwithstanding its life by this one Word. True words outside Scripture and the Church are spoken 'from a different source and in another tongue.'<sup>22</sup> In point of fact, the Church should be grateful to receive other true words also from without, in very

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<sup>18</sup> 'daß solche anderen wahren Worte auch *extra muros ecclesiae*' (CD IV/3.1, 110; KD 122).

<sup>19</sup> Biblical words have the character of a constant and universal authority to the extent that they are also an abiding whole which is given to the community throughout its history, and in which Jesus Christ accompanies it through this history. The biblical word is the 'concrete *vinculum pacis*' of the Church in every age and place. Hence it is the 'regular way' (CD IV/3.1, 131) to which we are directed.

<sup>20</sup> 'als mit wahren Worten zu rechnen' (CD IV/3.1, 114; KD 128).

<sup>21</sup> '... darf nicht nur, sondern **muß** damit rechnen, daß es solche Worte gibt und daß auch sie sie zu hören hat' (CD IV/3.1, 114-115 ea; KD 128 ea).

<sup>22</sup> 'von anderswoher und in anderer menschlicher Sprache' (CD IV/3.1, 114-115; KD 128).



different human words, in secular parables (*im Gleichnis profaner Worte*) (KD 128), even though it is grounded in, and ruled by, scriptural witnesses to this one Word. The Church has no reason to refuse this kind of stimulation and direction 'whatever its origin or form.'<sup>23</sup> If the community declines, in advance, these alien witnesses to the truth, it will lead to ossification. 'The [Christian] community is not Atlas bearing the burden of the whole world on its shoulders' (CD IV/3.1, 115). The Church has to learn through these true words of a very different origin and character. With this view Barth even asserts that the community would be 'foolish (*töricht*)' if it closed its ears to them (CD IV/3.1, 116; KD 129). That is to say, true words are *dependable* and therefore Christians 'can (*können*)' and 'must expect (*müssen erwarten*)' that His voice will also be heard outside Scripture and the Church (CD IV/3.1, 117; KD 130).

Of course Barth, at this point, notes that his acknowledgement of true words outside the witnesses of Scripture and the Church does not necessarily involve an appeal to a so-called 'natural theology', *i.e.* a knowledge of God given in and with the natural force of reason or to be attained in its exercise (CD IV/3.1, 117). The reason is that by way of natural theology humanity could attain only 'abstract impartation' concerning the knowledge of God the Creator and the Reconciler of all things, and human responsibility towards Him. What Barth has in mind is attestations of the 'self-impartation' of the God who acts as Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit, or words like Scripture and the Church which can be claimed as 'parables of the kingdom' (CD IV/3.1, 117). What Barth means by his reluctance to accept the label of natural theology in spite of his affirmation of true words outside Scripture and the Church is that the capacity of Jesus Christ to create these human witnesses is not restricted to His working on and to prophets, apostles, and His community alone. His capacity transcends the limits of this sphere (CD IV/3.1, 118). In other words, 'what was and is possible for Him in the narrower sphere is

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<sup>23</sup> 'woher sie auch komme und in welcher fremden Zunge' (CD III/3.1, 115; KD 128)

well within His powers in the wider.'<sup>24</sup> It is possible for God to raise up witnesses from this world of tarnished untruth, so that true words are uttered and heard even where it might seem impossible.

To put the over-arching power of the Word differently, as the resurrection of Jesus Christ proclaims that the Word of reconciliation not only happened in the past but it also speaks in the present, the Word of reconciliation has the full force to encompass the whole of humankind before, during, and after the event of proclamation. As this proclamation transcends all time and space the Word of reconciliation binds humanity essentially, internally, and absolutely, and not accidentally or partially. None of humanity can escape from His light, even though it might flee away from His light and thus sin against Him (*CD IV/3.1*, 154). Consequently, all living persons are potential hearers of the Word of God due to the noetic power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, although they might say that they have not heard it yet, or refuse to hear it. If this were not the case, He would not be risen (*CD IV/3.1*, 155). 'It [the Word] cannot then be subjected to any criterion of truth different from itself. It is itself the criterion of all different truths. Declared by God, it authenticates itself' (*CD IV/3.1*, 160). In short, the Word necessarily embraces all time and space as it has spoken as 'the final truth (*die*

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<sup>24</sup> (*CD IV/3.1*, 118). Barth refers the narrower sphere to the Bible and the Church, while he refers the wider sphere to 'secularism (*Profanität*)' (*CD IV/3.1*, 118; *KD* 132) which approximates either to a pure and absolute form, or mixed and relative one. A pure and absolute form of secularism is hostile, not only in so-called heathen territories, nor in a confessed atheistic culture or ethics, but also in the greatest proximity to the Christian Churches, or even in Christendom. Whereas a mixed and relative form of secularism can be seen in the countries or people that have been in some way reached and affected by the Gospel and the Church tradition to varying degrees. In this sphere there will be human words which attest the one Word of God, and thus can be regarded as a parable of the Kingdom (*Gleichnis des Himmelreiches*) for this sphere can always be explained as an 'echo' or 'positive answer' to the speech of Jesus Christ, attested by the ministry of the Christian community. But this relative secularism might be an even greater resistance to the Gospel for the very reason that it is used to being confronted by, and having come to terms with, it, and thus is able more strongly to consolidate itself against it, making certain concessions and accommodations no doubt, parading in large measure as a world of Christian culture, but closing its ears the more firmly against it, and under the sign of a horrified rejection of theoretical atheism, cherishing more radically and shamelessly a true atheism of practice. This greater resistance is found in the obduracy of Israel (Rom 9-11). If true words are to be heard and uttered from such a mixed and relative secularism, the so-called 'Christianised' or 'Christian' culture or society needs the same miracle as the absolute secularism or militant godlessness needs (*ibid.*, 120; *KD* 134).

*finale Wahrheit*)' because it is 'the truth itself (*die Wahrheit selbst*)' (CD IV/3.1, 160; KD 182).

However, we must notice that Barth's emphasis upon this transcending power and its efficacy in the finality of this Word is by no means the nullification of the actual existence and validity of true words, and therefore their existence is merely a possibility and not an actuality. Rather Barth wishes to underline the actual existence of true words *in spite of* their problems, limitations, and dangers.

There are problems and dangers in listening to these true words of the secular events or words. True words can never declare themselves as God does. Their declaration exist only in their limited, conditioned, and finite nature (CD IV/3.1, 163). They are not essentially, internally, and absolutely binding, even though they also bind. They neither give humanity freedom, nor do they speak of real judgment and loss or of real grace and salvation. They speak only of the constants of existence (CD IV/3.1, 156). True words are not a statement concerning the one Word nor a further development of the assertion that Jesus Christ is the one true Word (CD IV/3.1, 136). This means that they are not the self-revelation of God, although they can be truths or words or even 'revelations' (CD IV/3.1, 139). There are worldly words, but there is no worldly Word in which creation expresses itself in its unity and totality. From this angle, true words make themselves known 'only as partial truths, that none of them is the one whole truth' (CD IV/3.1, 159). True words are possible in virtue of the 'living' and 'self-developing seed' of the Word of God (CD IV/3.1, 121). True words, the 'free communications of Jesus Christ in world events,'<sup>25</sup> which come to the community through them lack the 'unity (*Einheit*)' and 'compactness (*Geschlossenheit*)' and therefore the 'constancy (*Konstanz*)' and 'universality (*Universalität*)' of His self-revelation (CD IV/3.1, 131; KD 148) even though they are uttered, claimed, and respected as true words. True words then might be salutary and necessary for a certain situation in the past. Yet it might also be that the community has still to receive very different words

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<sup>25</sup> 'den freien Kundgebungen Jesu Christi im Weltgeschehen' (CD IV/3.1, 131; KD 148).

from world events as directed by its Lord (CD IV/3.1, 131). What is said here and now is not His final word, but that of another time; not in self-contradiction, but in a very different situation He may well have another new word of this type. Also, while true words in world events apply virtually and potentially to the whole community, it is not at all the case that at every time and in every situation the community is able and ready to hear with a single ear and receive with a single heart. There are words which need decades and even centuries to be finally, and even then only approximately, heard and recognised throughout Christendom. This time-consuming procedure is not only due to the stupidity and limitation of human beings, but also due to the non-self-evident character of the true words: 'the character of its words as products of the omnipotent prophecy of Jesus Christ, is nowhere and never self-evident' (CD IV/3.1, 132). It is even possible that true words may sometimes be spoken and heard but not received at all in the community. Therefore, although these words may be heard, their truth must always be tested by the criterion to which Barth has referred (CD IV/3.1, 132-133). In short, the problem of creaturely words, the free communications of Jesus Christ in the world events, are their partiality and relativity in their power, validity, and efficacy. Hence there must be criteria<sup>26</sup> to discern true words from false words.

For Barth, nevertheless, it is important to recognise that God *uses the creature* as the setting for the Word of reconciliation (CD IV/3.1, 136). There *are*

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<sup>26</sup> There are three formal criteria: 1) Its 'harmony [fits in] (*einfügen*)' at some point with the whole context of the biblical message as centrally determined and characterised by Jesus Christ (CD IV/3.1, 126; KD 141-142). No true word can replace or emulate the biblical messages. If it is true 'a' word, it will be a 'good' and 'authentic commentary' (CD IV/3.1, 126), sounding out the word of the Bible. It will not lead its hearers away from Scripture, but more deeply into it; 2) *Dogma* and *confessions of the Church*. This is the secondary authority of the fathers and brethren of the Church. If true words lead to a breach with them, they show themselves to be false words. There are hardly any true words which go beyond the dogma and confessions of the Church (CD IV/3.1, 126-127); 3) Its *fruits*. The fruits, if they are true words, will have the character of affirmation and criticism, address and claim, a summon to faith and a call to repentance, and therefore to Gospel and Law. They will show themselves to be genuine parables of the kingdom in this unity of confirming and yet shaming, frightening, unsettling, and correcting words. When Christianity is called to repentance it is a criterion that has to do with a true word addressed to it in order to *upbuild the community*. The words are true only if they are the one by which the community is comforted in the true and New Testament sense (CD IV/3.1, 129).

true words *spoken* in and through nature and world-events, because God *uses* His *creatura* as the 'setting' or 'theatre' for the work of reconciliation (CD IV/3.1, 136). Likewise, humankind can also speak of the life-act of Jesus Christ only in relation to specific events in the world and only in the form of the narration of history and histories. Certainly this theatre cannot be identified with the life-act of Jesus Christ, with its regular mediation in Scripture and the existence of the community, or with His extraordinary forms of His presence and action. For the *creatura* is distinct from God the *Creatur* although it is actualised by Him (CD IV/3.1, 137). The cosmos has its own dynamic and movements. But whereas the cosmos is dominated and characterised by the rotation and return of many things, reconciliation 'impinges upon and determines the cosmos from without.'<sup>27</sup> This Word of reconciliation is His 'creative grace (*schöpferische Gnade*)' in which the persistence and constancy of the cosmos exists (CD IV/3.1, 138; KD 156). As the proclamation of the Word of reconciliation is a *new* event to the world, the act of the Word itself differs from the words spoken in and through the *creatura*.

We may say, therefore, as a fact that there *are* true words outside Scripture and the Church in spite of the problems and dangers implicit in such an affirmation. Our contention proves to be legitimate as we read that the 'simple point' is that true words are 'given' to humankind and to the cosmos. The cosmos as such 'has (*hat*)' its own lights and truths and therefore its own speech and words whether or not humanity affirms its knowledge (CD IV/3.1, 139; KD 157). The self-witness and lights of true words are '*not extinguished by the corruption of the relationship between God and man through the sin of man*' (CD IV/3.1, 139 ea), they are not extinguished by the Word, and their force and significance are not destroyed. On the contrary, as *the cosmos persists in all its forms and media before, during, and after the epiphany of Jesus Christ*, true words also speak before, during, and after this epiphany. The reason is that 'As the divine work of reconciliation does not negate the divine work of creation, nor deprive it of meaning, so it does not take

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<sup>27</sup> '*betrifft und bestimmt ihn von Außen her*' (CD IV/3.1, 138; KD 156).



from it its lights and language, nor tear asunder the original connection between creaturely *esse* and creaturely *nosse*.<sup>28</sup> These words are the 'luminosity («*Helligkeit*»)» of the *creatura* (CD IV/3.1, 139; KD 158). In such away, the *creatura* not merely exists but it also speaks to human beings and thus gives itself space to be perceived by human beings: 'In respect of man it can and must be said that the world created by God is also (although not merely) a text which may be read and understood, and at the same time its own reader and expositor' (CD IV/3.1, 141). The quality of this divinely created terrestrial being is what is meant when Barth speaks of created words, the free communications of Jesus Christ in the world events, which bring 'illumination' and 'enlightenment.'<sup>29</sup> These words prevent the world from being merely dark, or being plunged into absolute gloom by the sin of man. They tell us that there is still a measure of brightness in spite of the darkness of human sin. They are not divine disclosures nor eternal truths, 'but since these words are actually spoken and heard, the world neither is nor can be absolutely dumb or deaf. ... that even the worst communication does not completely fail to be

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<sup>28</sup> (CD IV/3.1, 139; KD 157). Here comes a theological dilemma. If we are going to insist on the assurance of our reconciliation, we cannot deny the ontological continuity that God the Reconciler is also God the Creator. If this were not the case, we could not be certain about our reconciliation as we may perhaps have to wait for our true Lord, the Creator, who alone could become our true Reconciler. To negate this ontological continuity, that God the Reconciler is also God the Creator, would imply a *discontinuity* between the 'old' and 'new' creation. Affirming this discontinuity between the 'old' and 'new' creation would inescapably imply the fact that, after all, His 'old' creation is nothing but a 'mistake', for otherwise He would not have made the 'old' creation a completely new one. This affirmation would necessitate our reconsideration of the traditional understanding of the omnipotence of God. To avoid these two problems we will have to accept the ontological continuity that God the Reconciler is also God the Creator. Nonetheless, if we have to accept this ontological continuity, what does Barth's view of a discontinuity that the 'new' creation is not an amendment of the 'old' creation, but a replacement of the 'old' one by the 'new' creation, mean since humankind still continues to sin, and therefore are still sinners in spite of the fact that it is a 'new' creation? Further, how could we concretely understand this newness of our reality without the 'old' creation? Incidentally, Barth is not clear as to whether his emphasis on the 'complete newness' of humankind, *i.e.*, a replacement of the old by the new and not a perfection of the old, means the negation or replacement of the 'old' creation.

<sup>29</sup> '*Lichtungen und Erleuchtungen*' (CD IV/3.1, 141; KD 159). The English translation omitted the word '*und Erleuchtungen*' which could be rendered as 'enlightenment'.

communication and may perhaps become better.’<sup>30</sup> Indeed, ‘We actually live with them. We cannot live without them’ (CD IV/3.1, 141; KD 160). The cosmos is ‘intelligent (*intelligent*).’ Hence it addresses its reason to the grasping of these lines, the ‘continuities (*Kontinuitäten*)’ and ‘constants (*Konstanten*)’ of the one in the many, the general in particular, the steadfast in change, the recurrent in alteration, the identical in the different, to humankind (CD IV/3.1, 142; KD 160). Certainly they are not the Word of reconciliation, the prophecy of Jesus Christ itself. No faith is needed to grasp these words but only the limited gift of ‘common sense’ (CD IV/3.1, 143; KD 161). True words are not a covenant of God with human beings which is declared and perceived, but ‘only a kind of divinely ordained concordat between the world and itself.’<sup>31</sup> They cannot produce parables of the kingdom of God. And they cannot be compared or considered together as if, for all their differences they were only two rays from one and the same light (CD IV/3.1, 150-152). The meaning of the existence of the world is that it is the ‘fitting sphere (*geeignete Raum*)’ and ‘setting (*Schauplatz*)’ of the great act of God, i.e., His overflowing love for human beings. True words do not speak of the great act of the love of God, nor of His covenant of grace. Their shining, their declaration, is strictly confined to the service for which they are ordained and empowered by the one true Word. Yet they are ‘something (*nicht nichts*).’ Along with many other things they also ‘have’ and ‘maintain’ this ‘immanent peace,’ and they display them as a ‘created light’ of their ‘created stability’ (CD IV/3.1, 143; KD 161-162). Again, as God the Reconciler is also God the Creator of the intelligent world, true words must be understood *in relationship* with the true Word. The Word ‘cannot possibly result in the exclusion of the latter [the self-attestations of the creature],

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Es ist aber, da diese Worte geredet und vernommen werden, nicht an dem, daß die Welt einfach stumm und taub wäre oder werden könnte. Darauf, daß diese Worte nicht aufhören, geredet und vernommen zu werden, beruht es vielmehr, daß die Welt nicht schlechthin sprachlos und vernunftlos werden kann, daß auch die schlechteste in der Welt stattfindende Kommunikation nicht aufhört, Kommunikation zu sein und möglicherweise auch bessere Kommunikation werden kann’ (CD IV/3.1, 141; KD 160).

<sup>31</sup> ‘nur so etwas wie ein von Gott angeordnetes Konkordat der Welt mit selber’ (CD IV/3.1, 143; KD 161).

seeing they derive their force from the same God' (CD IV/3.1, 152). As the one Word and Light is spoken, it is echoed and reflected in and through the cosmos, which is not created accidentally but with a view to the reconciliation and therefore to this revelation. 'What is reflected in them as they perform this service is the fact that the Creator is faithful to His creature with the eternal faithfulness which is active and powerful and revealed in His act [of grace] and revelation of grace in Jesus Christ, and which He has sworn to it with its very creation.'<sup>32</sup> In other words, the truth of God 'challenges (*problematisiert*)' and 'relativises (*relativiert*)' the truths of the creature and yet also the truth of God 'institutes (*instauriert*)' and 'integrates (*integriert*)' the truths of the creature (CD IV/3.1, 153; KD 174). Therefore, the Church must be ready to hear them and receive what they say as a 'corrective (*Korrektiv*)' of the tradition of the Church, as an 'impulse (*Motiv*)' to its reformation, and as a 'commentary (*Kommentar*)' on Scripture (CD IV/3.1, 130; KD 146). Unmistakeably, the uttering and receiving of such true words are part of the history of the Church. So the Church through its history experiences His self-disclosure by His constant address, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through the witness of His prophets and apostles, and therefore by means of the biblical word (CD IV/3.1, 130). But the Church *also* experiences 'His free communications in the parables of the kingdom which come to it *through the general history* of the world around it.'<sup>33</sup>

With this view, Barth emphasises the importance of true words in the following sense. God wills that 'it [lights and words] ... should be taken up and used in the service of His Word, and given a part in its work' (CD IV/3.1, 156; KD 178). 'The positive thing which takes place in the confrontation of the little lights of creation with the great light of its Creator is that they are not passed over or

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<sup>32</sup> 'Was sich, indem sie ihm dienen, in ihnen spiegelt, ist dies, daß der Schöpfer seinem Geschöpf treu ist: in der ewigen Treue, die in seiner Gnadentat und Gnadenoffenbarung in Jesus Christus kräftig, wirksam und manifest wird, die er ihm aber schon mit seiner Erschaffung geschworen hat' (CD IV/3.1, 153; KD 174).

<sup>33</sup> 'seine freien Kundgebungen in dem sie umgebenden Weltgeschehen in den ihr von dorthier begegnenden Gleichnissen des Himmelreiches' (CD IV/3.1, 130 ea; KD 147).

ignored, let alone destroyed or extinguished, but integrated in the great light. They are not incapable of this integration,<sup>34</sup> for they are created by God (CD IV/3.1, 156). For this reason, they are even binding to a limited yet unmistakeable degree even though their orders, directions, force, values, and validity are only in terms of this world.

And the integration, the description to service, which comes to the self-witness of the creature in its encounter with the self-witness of God, consists in the fact that it is taken up by the latter, and that its limited power to bind can be invested with the absolute power of the Word of God, or conversely that the absolute power of the Word of God can invest itself with the limited power of creaturely self-witness (CD IV/3.1, 157; KD 178-179).

In this way, they 'can (*können*)' conceal their divine force, value, and validity in the relative force, 'and yet in this very concealment be God's self-declaration and as such absolutely binding' (CD IV/3.1, 157; KD 179). they are thus integrated and instituted into His 'direct service (*direkten Dienst*)' and set in a relation in which they do not stand of themselves. They 'can (*können*)' thus be truths which 'shine as expressions' of the one truth (CD IV/3.1, 157). Again, they are not 'true words' on their own, but they are true words only as 'genuine witnesses' to, and 'attestations' of, the declaration of Jesus Christ Himself (CD IV/3.1, 123). Metaphorically speaking, while the one Word of God is the 'centre (*Mitte*)' of the circle, the words are the 'periphery (*Peripherie*)' of the circle (CD IV/3.1, 122; KD 137). In this qualified sense, therefore, the Church must be prepared to hear true words 'even in the words and voices of world-occurrence,' 'not as an alien sounds but as segments of that periphery concretely orientated from its centre and towards its totality, as signs and attestations of the lordship of the one prophecy of Jesus Christ, true words which we must receive as such even though they come from this source.'<sup>35</sup> This means that the one Word, the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, is not

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<sup>34</sup> 'Das ist das positive, was sich in der Konfrontierung der kleinen Lichter der Schöpfung mit dem großen ihres Schöpfers ereignet: sie werden nicht übergangen, nicht ignoriert, geschweige denn zerstört und ausgelöscht. Sie werden dem großen Licht integriert. Sie sind solcher Integrierung nicht unfähig' (CD IV/3.1, 156; KD 178).

<sup>35</sup> 'auch in den Stimmen und Worten des ... Weltgeschehens,' 'Wir haben uns dann darauf gefaßt zu machen, tatsächlich - nicht irgendwelche fremde und fremdartige Laute, sondern (als Segmente jener Peripherie in konkreter Ausrichtung von ihrer Mitte her und auf ihre Totalität hin)

limited to the gift and commission of the Church alone. They are 'taken up into association by Him.' So they 'can' acquire their 'distinctive orientation (*eigentümliche Richtung*)' (CD IV/3.1, 159; KD 181). Not in any synthesis (*Synthese*), but in connexion with (*Zusammenhang*) the Word of God, they 'can' point beyond their diverse statements to a unity and totality of creation which 'will not differ' from the unity and totality declared in the Word of God (CD IV/3.1, 159; KD 181). With this view Barth even declares: 'What they say can so harmonise with what He Himself says that to hear Him is to hear them, and to hear them to hear Him.'<sup>36</sup> Creation acquires this power of speech as the Word speaks through and in it (Ps 19:1, 4). In short, creaturely words, the intelligent world in virtue of the free communications of Jesus Christ in world events, are integrated into, and instituted by, the '*ministerium Verbi Divini*. ... By the *Verbum Divinum* itself they [words] are made worthy' (CD IV/3.1, 164).

The debate between Brunner and Barth displays at least two different perspectives. One interesting observation is their different presuppositions in understanding the *sola-gratia* which we have already mentioned.<sup>37</sup> A more important point is that Brunner understands the issue of natural theology from the perspective of the 'old' creation, the creation of the world in the beginning. His persistent argument is that if it is God the *Creator* who became not only the Sustainer but also the Reconciler then nature, including humanity, cannot be completely blind to God in spite of human sin. In other words, if the creation is such that it has been sustained by God and is of such value that it has been saved by Him, then the world, including the human race, cannot be completely empty of divine glory or goodness. On the contrary, Barth understands the question of natural theology from the perspective of the 'new' creation, the reconciliation. That is to

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als Zeichen und Bezeugungen der Herrschaft der einen Prophetie Jesu Christi auch im profanen Weltgeschehen wahre Worte zu vernemen, die wir als solche, auch wenn sie von dorthier kommen, zu hören haben' (CD IV/3.1, 123-124; KD 139).

<sup>36</sup> 'Es kann dann, was sie sagen, mit dem, was Gott selbst sagt, so zusammenklingen, daß, wer ihn hört, auch sie hört, und wer sie hört, auch ihn hört ...' (CD IV/3.1, 159; KD 182).

<sup>37</sup> Footnote 16 in pages 185-186.



say, if humanity is totally corrupt that the grace of God alone (*sola-gratia*) enables humanity to know God, then we cannot speak of the possibility of the human knowledge of God in and through nature. Rather, this *sola-gratia* is fully revealed in and through the 'new' creation alone, the reconciliation. Such different perspectives resulted in the two different emphases and therefore the two different orientations of the one issue. Nonetheless, what Barth says in his later theology is that if God the Reconciler who made the world a 'new' creation, is also God the Creator, then 'true words' must be capable of existing and speaking in and through nature. In other words, if the power of the Word of reconciliation encircles all time and space, then 'true words' must be spoken in and through 'wordly-occurrence.'<sup>38</sup>

What Barth wants to stress overall in his later theology is not that human beings can have the knowledge of God purely through nature. On the contrary, what he emphasises is that it is *nature* and *world-events* which are intelligent enough to reflect true words, as the Word of the reconciliation is too powerful to be confined within the event itself. When discussing this aspect of natural theology, Barth may well have been careful to distinguish the goodness of nature from the corruption of humankind. Ultimately such a subtle articulation might vindicate his contention that the affirmation of true words must not be understood as an affirmation of natural theology, but this possibility simply becomes groundless on the basis of his rejection of Brunner's view that 'The creation of the world is at the same time revelation, self-communication of God' (*NaTheol* 80). Nevertheless, in his later theology, Barth affirms 'true words,' that is, 'free communication of Jesus Christ' in and through the *cosmos*, and therefore the 'intelligent *cosmos*' - a view which he once simply dismissed. Although this affirmation does not amount to a retraction of the early critique of Brunner, it does represent a *qualified* endorsement of natural theology within the sphere of history and faith. Many theologians, however, have either overlooked or treated too lightly this modification. Hans

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<sup>38</sup> 'Weltgeschehen' (*CD* IV/3.1, 123, 131; *KD* 139, 148).

Küng, however, has pointed to the problem:

... theologians have paid too little attention to the fact that in this last, self-contained volume of *Church Dogmatics* (1959) the old Karl Barth ... does return to his harshly exclusive thesis: Jesus Christ 'is the *one*, the *only* light of life.' But then, ... he goes on ... there are, in fact, 'other lights' alongside the one light of Jesus Christ ... there *are* 'other true words' (*KD* IV/3, 40-188) alongside the one Word. Obviously a new evaluation of the knowledge of God from the world of creation and from 'natural theology' is emerging in Barth's late theology, a new evaluation too of philosophy and human experience as a whole. Indeed we find, in an indirect, concealed fashion, a new evaluation of the world religions, which Barth had earlier lumped together ... and simply dismissed as forms of unbelief, or worse yet, of idolatry and works righteousness.<sup>39</sup>

Our analysis thus far clearly confirms this view of Barth's modification of his assessment of natural theology. This can be further clarified by proceeding to a number of further points.

*Firstly*, Brunner holds to the possibility of human knowledge of God in terms of 'general revelation.' Humanity can have knowledge of God in and through nature since God 'imprints' the image of Himself in nature. By contrast, Barth emphasises the existence of 'true words' and their constant expression in world-occurrences. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, the *announcement* of our reconciliation, is too great to be confined within the sphere of the biblical and the churchly witnesses. However, we notice virtually no difference between Brunner's 'general revelation' and Barth's 'true words,' as neither of them claims to be the same as His self-revelation. Both Brunner and Barth admitted to limitations in terms of the true words incapability for the salvation of humankind and in terms of their ambiguity. Do not 'general revelation' and the 'true words' virtually correspond to each other? Does Barth not eventually end by saying the same thing as Brunner had said, and as such, open up the possibility of natural theology?

*Secondly*, one of the major reasons for Barth's harsh attack on Brunner's

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<sup>39</sup> (Hans Küng, 'Karl Barth after the Postmodern Paradigm' in: *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* (Vol. 9, No. 1, 1988, p. 26). According to Küng, this new evaluation means an "explosion" of his 'so cogently constructed dogmatic world' at least in principle. Küng sees this explosion as a coming back behind modernity from his, thus far, paradigm change from modernity to postmodernity. In this view, Küng insists that it is wrong to label Barth as the 'neo-Orthodox' theologian. See pp. 8-31 (*ibid*).

understanding of natural theology was due to its insufficient power to bring salvation for humankind, but had Brunner not already mentioned this fundamental problem while he was advocating the general revelation in the *creatura* (*NaTheol* 26)? This being the case, could Barth then justify his rejection of natural theology so aggressively against Brunner on its deficiency of salvific power?

*Thirdly*, Barth, in tackling Brunner, asked if he had an opinion that idolatry is a somewhat 'imperfect preparatory stage' as the 'service' of the true God (*NaTheol* 22). Yet does Barth not in fact admit this 'imperfect preparatory stage' as the service for the true Word when he says that true words are a 'service' to the one true Word (*CD IV/3.1*, 153)?

*Fourthly*, Barth pointed out that his affirmation of true words is by no means an appeal to so-called 'natural theology' since what he has in view is attestations of self-impartation of God Himself, who acts in the Son by the Holy Spirit, or words like the Bible and the Church which can be claimed as 'parables of the kingdom' (*CD IV/3.1*, 117). How and who can decide whether or not this can be claimed as 'parables of the kingdom'? Does this question of certain criteria and their veracity not simply suggest that there are practically no parables of the kingdom in world-events apart from the divine self-impartation, and the Bible and the Church? If it virtually does, does this not imply a petrification (ossification) of the dynamism of the world by not allowing any virtual existence of true words which can be claimed as 'parables of the kingdom'? It should also be asked whether true words are then merely a theoretical possibility and not a practical reality? If so, again, what does Barth mean by his statement that true words are spoken even in world-events, since the Word, which is spoken in and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is too great to be shut up within the sphere of the Bible and the Church? If Barth truly meant the Word's *unfailing* power of self-speech, does this not necessarily indicate the *actual* knowledge of God outside Scripture and the Church, and therefore a homologation of 'general revelation' which he once so harshly rejected against Brunner? Moreover, what are these 'parables of the kingdom'? If we are not mistaken, what Barth refers to by these 'parables of the

kingdom' is nothing but these 'true words' spoken through 'world-events.' But what are these 'world-events'? Could Barth think of something beyond nature, including human reason, inasmuch as he insists upon God's use of the *cosmos* as a medium of His words? As a corollary of his argument, did Barth not affirm one of the issues in natural theology irrespective of whether or not he likes the phrase 'natural theology'? Incidentally, we have to remember that it is not only Barth who did not wish us to understand his acknowledgement of 'true words' as an appeal to natural theology, but Brunner also prefers 'the Christian doctrine of general revelation' or 'the Christian doctrine of revelation in nature' rather than the phrase of 'natural theology.' According to John Baillie, Brunner distinguishes between an objective sense of the term which he accepts, and a subjective sense which he rejects. By the former he means that a knowledge of God in creation can come only to those who are already enlightened by the Christian revelation of him. By the latter he means a knowledge of God which might be supposed to be accessible to the heathen or to independent rational argumentation.<sup>40</sup> If Baillie's understanding is correct, then again it is difficult to concede whether there is any virtual difference between Barth and Brunner in perceiving natural theology.

*Fifthly*, another reason why we cannot help but assume Barth's opening of the closed door of one of the issues of natural theology lies in his determination to insist upon the 'once-for-all-ness,' and therefore upon the 'universality,' of the noetic event, the resurrection. The event of reconciliation took place finally and completely. The resurrection proclaimed itself in finality. It will never be repeated. This implies that the divine self-confirmation of our reconciliation through the resurrection took place for *all* humankind. This universal announcement of 'all' means that the power of reconciliation overarches, not only the questions of humankind who have existed after this event of announcement, but all the generations existing before, during, and after this announcement. If this were not so, it is not only the case that the resurrection will have to occur again and again

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<sup>40</sup> John Baillie, 'Introduction' in: *NaTheol* 9.

for a certain generation in order to maintain the same efficacy of reconciliation, but it also becomes a problem for those who have not even heard the announcement through the biblical witnesses. That is to say, there *must be* the knowledge of God spoken and shone outside the Bible and the Church in virtue of this Word's finality. This universal announcement of our reconciliation in and through the resurrection admits the existence of true words, *i.e.*, the 'general revelation,' outside the Bible and the Church. By implying this, Barth simply opens the deadly-closed door of natural theology, even though at the earlier stage, Barth simply dismissed Brunner's affirmation of true words in the *cosmos* by saying that the world is gloom and dark because of human sin. Barth's new perspective on this issue of the darkness of the world, because of human sin, is revealed when he says 'its [true words'] self-witness and lights are not extinguished by the corruption of the relationship between God and man through the sin of man' (CD IV/3.1, 139).

*Sixthly*, what are the concrete clues for this overflowing reaching power that 'what was and is possible for Him in the narrower sphere is possible within His powers in the wider' (CD IV/3.1, 118)? Are these, and can these, not be anything other than either created nature or human reason or instinct? Further, if the Word of God can make itself to be heard in and through the *human* secularism which is by nature resistant to the Word, how much more can it be heard in and through the *divine* nature which stands beyond human manipulation? Barth refers to Psalm 19:1, 4 in order to admit true words through the creation of God (CD IV/3.1, 164). Interestingly enough, however, in his early theology Barth sternly discarded Brunner's affirmation of the 'general revelation' despite the latter's reference to the same passage Psalm 19:1, 4.

*Seventhly*, Barth ruthlessly disposed of Brunner's view that humankind still retains the knowledge of God in and through nature, although its heart (reason) is darkened by its sin. Yet Barth now tells quite a different story by stating that 'true words' prevent the world from being merely dark by the sin of humankind: '... the world neither is nor can be absolutely dumb or deaf. ... that even the worst communication does not completely fail to be communication and may perhaps



become better. ... We cannot live without them [true words in and through the cosmos]' (CD IV/3.1, 141). Is this argument not a clear modification of his early assertion that humanity cannot know God in and through nature, since the *imago Dei* is darkened 'through and through' by its sin?

In addition, Barth in his early theology insisted that humankind needs the absolute grace of God as its reason is totally corrupt. Yet he now gives a modified view by stating that human beings can know true words by their 'common sense' (CD IV/3.1, 143; KD 161) and therefore it does not need faith. Undoubtedly Barth does not say that the one Word can be known by human 'common sense.' Yet does this view not imply a considerable revision on the possibility of human knowledge of God through the nature, in comparison to his uncompromising argument that there are no true words outside Scripture and the Church since the human race, and as such the world, is totally darkened by its sin? Does *humanity's* 'common sense' not already presuppose divine *sola-gratia* if the once *totally* corrupt humanity can obtain true words?<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Here, P. Tillich's early contention echoes when he said that there must be something to be touched by God if God wishes to communicate Himself with earthly human beings. Insofar as the issue of natural theology is concerned, the fundamental problem lies in the different assumptions or emphases of the issue. If we are not mistaken the advocates of natural theology, and especially many Roman Catholic theologians, seem to focus on the *basis of (divine) communication* so that human beings *can* know God and can understand His will. The supporters of natural theology are concerned primarily with the communication 'object' which needs to be touched.

Nevertheless, what we have to notice is that Barth does not negate this requirement of communication ground. In fact, Barth was also well aware of the fact that a theology performed by human beings cannot proceed without form of communication ground. Rather, his fundamental emphasis centres on the issue that this natural theology, *viz.* this communication ground *too*, stands under the realm of *God's initiative*; human beings can know God only when *God* creates this ground of communication. Our appreciation of the word 'too' proves to be correct as we have already seen Barth's affirmation of the realities of 'many words' in the world, apart from divine self-revelation, Scripture, and Church. Thus if we are to describe Barth's view of natural theology, we may say that human beings can know God through nature or the world when they see and understand the world in, and through, the *eyes of faith* in God the Creator. Conversely, when human beings have faith in God as the Creator of the universe, then they can know God. Now the fundamental issue is whether natural theology emphasises a perceptibility of natural humanity, or a view of the faith of humanity. This question is whether we lay stress on the divine initiative, or on the essentiality of the basis of communication itself.

## Summary

Accusing Barth of having a 'high' christology on the basis of his early emphasis on the 'otherness' of God loses its veracity as Barth announces the paradigm shift from the divinity to the humanity of God, from the 'otherness' to the 'togetherness' of God with humankind.

Barth's understanding of the doctrine of predestination is another theological foundation underpinning our thesis. His transformation of the doctrine of Predestination into *The Doctrine of the Election of Grace* tells us not only of his new understanding of the doctrine of election itself, but it also reveals his christology as a 'low' christology rather than a 'high' christology. The reason is this.

According to Barth, God elected the humanity of Christ *before* the creation of the *cosmos*. By this election, all human beings are also elected for reconciliation. The power of this election lies in its *a priori*, namely in its unconditional validity, since the election took place prior to the creation of humankind. For this reason the doctrine of election is not a 'dreadful decree' but 'the sum' of the Gospel. Significantly, the election of grace interprets nothing but the very content of the christology 'from below' *en masse*: the life-act, death, resurrection, and exaltation. This christology 'from below' is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the interpretation of the election. This concrete manifestation implies, as we have seen, that both the *a priori* election and the *a posteriori* manifestation correspond to each other. But this correspondence does not mean an easy alternative view, namely, that Barth's christology says the 'same thing' whether it is viewed from the perspective of the *a priori* election or from the perspective of the *a posteriori* life-act of Jesus. Rather, the correspondence is to say that the election of grace is the *theological root*<sup>42</sup> to understanding Barth's christology as one 'from below' for the following reasons.

*Firstly*, if the *a priori* election corresponds to the *a posteriori* life-act of the *Royal Man*, the christology 'from below', to the extent that both give the *same*

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<sup>42</sup> The doctrine of election is one out of the three theological contexts of the christology 'from below'. The two others are the election's historical fulfilment in the event of incarnation, and the election's basis of revelation in the resurrection and ascension of the humanity of Christ.

message, then the election is the *genuine substance* in Barth's christology because it tells us nothing but this Gospel, this particular life-act of Jesus 'from below' *en masse*.

*Secondly*, acknowledging that, for Barth, the election is the *a priori* event to all other divine acts, and it is the election of the *humanity* of Christ, then, strictly speaking, Barth begins his christology with the humanity of Christ, and to this extent, with christology 'from below'. From all eternity God determined Himself to be the God of *this human being* and as such of all humankind. This demonstrates how crucial the humanity of Christ is in Barth's christology. To stress this, Barth states: 'Ontologically, therefore, the covenant of grace is already included and grounded in Jesus Christ, in the *human form* and *human content* which God willed to give His Word from all eternity' (CD IV/1, 45 ea). Again, if the actual christological starting-point is *this humanity* of Christ, it is highly doubtful to stamp Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' in view of the Logos christology. In short, both the *antecedence* of the election and the election of the *humanity* of Christ implies the fact that the election is the *genuine beginning* of Barth's christology, so that to classify Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' because he starts his christology from the incarnation of the Logos, 'from above', is a much too superficial judgment.

*Thirdly*, it is true that Barth deals with *The Doctrine of Election* in the context of *The Doctrine of God* (CD II/2), and not in christology. Yet it would be too naive if Barth's christology is to be understood as a 'high' christology in view of the doctrine of God: Barth's christology is a christology 'from above' because it is God who determines christology, as it is God who elected the humanity of Christ 'from above'. The reason is that this elected humanity of Christ is nothing other than the electing God Himself. Certainly, as we saw already, Barth launches his dogmatics with *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (CD I/1). However, what we must also remember is that this doctrine of the Trinity is the exposition of *the specific revelation*. To deal with the doctrine of the Trinity within Church Dogmatics is *adequate* not because human capacity of rationale could imagine it, but because the specific revelation, manifested in and through the particular Jesus, leads us to

express it. In this way, the overall orientation and content of Barth's christology is found in the uncompromising dogmatic axiom that the fact or the history, the 'from below' is *presupposed*<sup>43</sup> before the meaning or the interpretation, the 'from above'.

Some accused Barth of having a 'high' christology in view of his rejection of natural theology. In other words, Barth's christology is a christology 'from above' since, by discarding 'general revelation' in and through the *cosmos*, he does not allow any channel from nature to God, to the Word of God Jesus Christ. It is true that Barth stringently championed himself as 'the anti natural theologian' at an early stage. Human beings cannot know God unless He reveals Himself, because humanity is totally corrupted by its sin and the *cosmos* does not reveal God. However, this understanding turns out to be a one-sided observation as Barth developed a new orientation in facing the issue of natural theology. The world is not completely blind despite human sin, for the Word of reconciliation impinges upon all time and space. In such a way, the world reflects true words in and through world-events. The *cosmos* is intelligent. Theologically speaking, the *cosmos* must reflect true words since the Reconciler is nothing but the Creator.

As far as we can see, Barth rejects the power and the utility of natural theology for the following theological reasons. First, if humanity could truly know God through nature and world-events without His self-revelation, then what is the use of His life, death, and resurrection? The second reason is that this knowledge of God through general revelation cannot lead humankind to salvation. This second reason seems to imply the fact that his later acknowledgement of the existence of true words, and its constant speech in and through nature, does not necessarily mean his coming back to the kind of natural theology that he opposed in his early theology.

One thing that Barth overlooked was Brunner's clear cut presupposition that human knowledge of the true God is possible only through divine self-revelation,

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<sup>43</sup> This presupposition forces us to understand Barth's doctrine of election from the perspective of christology instead of the perspective of Theology. Indeed, understood from this perspective, Barth's Theology is christology.

and therefore that human knowledge of God through nature is not sufficient for salvation. This was because even while Brunner was still arguing the importance and necessity of natural theology. For this reason Brunner pointed out that his debate with Barth is nothing but 'a dispute about words' (*NaTheol* 22).

Another interesting thing by which both Barth and Brunner justify their acknowledgement of one of the issues of natural theology is their different emphases on the same thing. On the one hand, Barth argues that there must be other true words outside the witnesses of the Bible and the Church, *i.e.*, true words in and through the *cosmos*, because the Word of reconciliation is too great to be confined within the sphere of a specific time and space. In other words, Barth sanctioned the existence of true words from the view of the overreaching power of the Reconciler, so he states that the *Reconciler* is the Creator. On the other hand, for Brunner the natural theology must be maintained because the *Creator* is the Reconciler and the Sustainer. God cannot leave the world and humankind without any clues to know Him, indeed He must have left something for humankind to be recognised however imperfect that may be. If our recognition that their different arguments are nothing but a matter of different emphasis from a different perspective on the same conclusion, we can hardly distinguish Barth's rejection of natural theology from Brunner's affirmation of natural theology.

*Prima facie*, Barth seems to be rejecting not only the actuality of natural theology, but even its possibility. This view appears to be confirmed when we put his uncompromising theological axiom that 'humanity can know God only when God reveals Himself' in front of the issue of natural theology. It is true that Barth bears out this theological axiom throughout his theology and as such, christology. Nevertheless, as Barth revises one of the major issues of natural theology, it is not only that we *must not*, but we *cannot* miss his virtual affirmation of natural theology, which he once so vigorously negated. This affirmation becomes evident as he simply admits the existence of true words outside the witnesses of the Bible and the Church. This admission explicitly contrasts with his early contention that Scripture alone is the responsible and basic norm for the knowledge of God and the will of God.



## CONCLUSION

Our analysis thus far shows that many theologians labelled Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' or a 'high' christology for various reasons. We saw, at the same time, that the concepts 'from above' and 'from below' are too complex to be simply defined. In the context of our thesis, however, we argued that Barth's christology is one 'from below' *as much as* it is a christology 'from above'. What does this mean?

To begin our conclusion, it must be clear that our thesis is by no means to underestimate or to suppress unnecessarily the centrality of the 'from above' element in Barth's christology. Rather, our thesis is by all means intended to provide a *proper estimation* of the significance of the 'from below' element in his christology. This implies first of all that *the 'from above' element is too conspicuous and critical to overlook in Barth's christology*. In fact, if we subtract or reduce this 'from above' element in his thought, then it would be a sheer manipulation or distortion of Barth's christology. Nevertheless, the converse is also true; the 'from above' element must not be allowed to obscure the genuine emphasis on the 'from below' element in Barth's christology, and thus to overshadow his christology 'from below'. Let us examine these questions again by way of conclusion.

### 1. The Prominence of the 'from above' Element in Barth's Christology

Barth's theological axiom that 'we know God only when God reveals Himself' had many theological consequences in reshaping the traditional as well as his contemporary theological circles, and it still continues to challenge our theological thinking in one way or another. We can account at least the following three points:

(1) The theology of '*sola revelationis*' was the replacement of *God's freedom and sovereignty*. By divine revelation Barth means the divine *self-revelation*. Human beings cannot postulate the revelation of God or impose any necessities upon it. If the revelation of God takes place according to human expectations and desires, the revelation would be nothing other than the humanly

projected image of god. In His being and act God is totally free and as such sovereign, otherwise He would become merely one of the objects of human speculation, or human possession. Accordingly, if we ask the necessity of His incarnation, the answer would have to be the 'divine necessity' (CD IV/1, 239).

Further, this sovereign and free revelation 'from above' re-appears in his discussion about the resurrection as well. For Barth, the Easter event is the 'pre-historical' event in the sense that although it is 'fact,' as it actually took place its reality is beyond history. History cannot capture this 'new' act of God. This concept of the 'pre-historical' therefore could implicate itself as a 'from above' in terms of Christ's being and act. And this 'pre-historical' event, which could be sensed as a christology 'from above' is, in other words, 'for the first time all God's revealing and being revealed (in Him and generally)' (CD IV/1, 301). As such, Barth's christological paradigm still lies on the divine initiative in the sense that his christology stands or exists only at the *moment* when God (divinity of Christ) reveals Himself as God or Christ 'from above'. For this reason, the idea of the divine act is prevalent throughout Barth's christology. In such a way, the theology of revelation is all about *to let God be God*.

(2) This divine self-revelation has a further implication in that it shatters all human attempts at finding God. All *human religions* and *cultures* are rejected as 'unbelief,' because God is not to be mixed with any forms of human religion or culture. If this were not the case God would be eventually dissolved into them. More pertinently, any forms or activities of religion and culture could justify, not only their forms and activities, but could even identify themselves with God and His will. God should have a means of expression in order to communicate Himself with the cosmos if He is to be the truly relevant Being for, in and to the world. But as it is God who creates this means of communication, human beings cannot postulate this means. Indeed, as far as the existence and act of God is concerned, human beings ('from below') cannot do anything but wait for His free and sovereign act ('from above'). God stands over against any human forms and activities of religion and culture. This is why Barth launches his christology

primarily with the divine *self*-revelation ‘from above’ to ‘below’, which he phrases as ‘the Son of God goes into the far country’ (CD IV/1, 157-210), because in this way he constantly lays stress upon the divinity of Christ being the Subject of christology and not the humanity of Christ. This incarnation is worked out within the Godhead, the Trinity, before the creation. Naturally, while the divine dominates and offers, the human follows and receives.

(3) As the revelation is a sovereign freedom of God Himself, the divine self-revelation is an *event*. This divine revelation does not remain in a static or past history, but freely acts and reveals Himself. Thus revelation is a *new* event which takes place anew moment by moment, and therefore is a *dynamic* event. For Barth, this dynamism and newness of revelation signifies the divine *relativisation* of all human ideas and structures, since a fresh appearance (event) entails a different situation and time, and therefore demands a *new* solution or answer. As such, responsible Christian christology cannot give a permanent endorsement to any *status quo* of mundane ideologies, structures, religion, culture, or privatisation of God and faith, but it should *always challenge* them.

## 2. Two Fundamental Reasons for Dealing with Our Thesis

Why, then, insist on the ‘from below’ in Barth’s christology? Is our attempt purely a painstaking work of hair-splitting, a demonstration of thoughtful pedantry or simply a kind of sophistication? Certainly, when we observe Barth’s christology purely in the context of divine self-revelation (incarnation), and if we mean the ‘from above’ in Barth’s christology in terms of his apparent method of approach alone, then it is more than fair to say that Barth’s christology is one ‘from above’. Nevertheless, the power of this understanding ‘from above’ needs to be counter-balanced. The reason is that no one can postulate or even absolutise the method of approach in characterising Barth’s christology since there *are* other aspects to be considered as well. It is vital to note that Barth demonstrates other significant aspects *alongside* the significance and gravity of the approaching method. This

means that it would be a fatal misconception not to see Barth's christology from the standpoint of a *totus Christus* as he also consistently articulated this point of view. This is what Barth means when he says that we should do theology (christology) not in an *analytical* ('*nicht analytisch*') way but in a *synthetical* ('*sondern synthetisch*') (CD IV/3,1. 323; KD 373) or *comprehensive* way. We believe that one of the major problems of Barth interpreters is found in their *analytical* mind-set rather than a *synthetical* mind-set. Recognising this problem, Hunzinger's critique of the custom of Barth scholars is instructive when he says that 'The task of responsible criticism presupposes a more reliable depiction of the *overall terrain*, as well as of the *proportional relationships* among the various segments, than has usually been the case.'<sup>1</sup>

We should also remember that Barth significantly *changes* (*modifies*) his thoughts in the course of time. In parenthesis, we judge this change to be acceptable as he predicted such a possibility of change when he once characterised one of the natures of doing theology in terms of *theologia viatorum*. This change is what Barth scholars mean by the 'early' (ca. until 1931) and 'late' (ca. since 1931 onwards). It is found particularly in his *christological paradigm shift*, viz. *The Humanity of God*, and therefore, a genuine understanding of Barth's christology will be at risk unless we consider these elements as well.<sup>2</sup> Such a critical observation motivates two major reasons for dealing with this 'high-low' issue in particular. Firstly, we are concerned with a *fair evaluation* of Barth's christology. Secondly, such a fair assessment is necessitated by its *theological implication* which

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<sup>1</sup> (George Hunzinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* [New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], p. x. ea). On this conceptual basis, Hunzinger recommends the reading of Barth's theology in an *holistic view* rather than to read him in any other way, despite the fact that the motif of his theology could be classified in various ways (*ibid.*, 4-23). McLean, too, stresses the necessity of a holistic view which he calls 'the whole-part' principle or perspective, and with which he actually writes to discuss Barth's view of humanity (CD III/2) (Stuart McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981], pp. 1-194, esp. 11-14).

<sup>2</sup> '... judgments made of his work based on the earlier theology alone are bound to be partial.' 'Whosoever has read him [Barth] firsthand will not be able to dismiss him lightly or accept one-dimensional renditions of his ideas. ... reading his later writings is essential for the theologically literate' (McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* 2, 5).

is too critical to trivialise. It is necessary because we believe that this implication is primarily Barth's lesson and thus we attempt to maximise this lesson by listening to his thought rather than speaking to his thought.

Generally speaking, this means that many theologians simply overlook the significance of the 'from below' element in Barth's christology, or even 'play down' or reduced this 'low' element from a certain point of view which may be legitimate in their own contexts. However, it must be underlined that arguing Barth's christology simply as a christology 'from above' is highly questionable, since Barth *himself* clearly states that a responsible Christian christology must speak both 'from above' *and* 'from below'. The two movements of christology are virtually *one action in two forms*: 'The atonement as it took place in Jesus Christ is the one inclusive event of this going out of the Son of God and coming in of the Son of Man' (CD IV/2, 21). We may give our opinions on Barth's christology. But *any interpretation cannot be the primary reference or authority over what the author (Barth in our context) actually said, but any interpretation can only be a secondary reference*. The reason is that we cannot always postulate that our understandings are an exact reflection upon the author's intention and meaning. Moreover, readers' or listeners' different understanding, comprehensibility, and interest could, easily produce manifold understandings of one object. Therefore, marking Barth's christology as a 'high' christology cannot convince us that simply. We suppose such simple or intentional mis-representations are either caused by a misunderstanding or by a simple presumption which, in most cases, (we believe), has to do with a lack of serious studies on Barth.

Precisely speaking, stamping Barth as having a 'high' christology is extremely questionable for the reasons described in section 3 which in turn constitute a proper estimation of Barth's christology. Further, we will discussion about the theological importance of our proper appraisal, since our measure of *Sachkritik* ('content critique' in terms of a 'holistic critique') asks not only 'what is' or 'what means,' but also 'why' this or that particular thing or issue.



### 3. The Constituents of a Proper Estimation of Barth's Christology

- 1) *The 'high' christology stands only in its making a breakthrough and an integration of the 'low' christology*

As we are concerned with a proper evaluation of Barth's christology, we will have to look at its framework. The first volume of the doctrine of reconciliation is all about the divine incarnation '*from above downwards*' in which the possibility, necessity and relevance of the life-death-resurrection is mainly dealt with. The second part of the doctrine of the reconciliation is all about the human exaltation '*from below upwards*', in which the life-act of the *Royal Man* stands as the content of the historical Jesus. The third volume of the doctrine of reconciliation is about the *unity* of the two natures and the two movements of Jesus Christ in which He is described as the true witness, and as such the guarantor, of our reconciliation. Barth's placement of the 'from below' element within his christology tells us that the 'high' christology cannot stand on its own without the 'low' christology. Indeed, Barth does not bypass the 'low' christology and nor does he make it a merely secondary matter, but he makes a *breakthrough* and *integrates* the 'low' christology *as it is the constitutional part* of the entire christology. As such Barth demonstrates the 'low' christology as being the centre of christology *as long as* the 'high' christology is. Additionally, if we accept Barth's view that christology is eventually all about the kingly rule of God, and as such the Gospel, then our acceptance further advises us that the element of the christology 'from below' stands truly in the centre of Barth's christology, because for him the life-act (the 'from below') is the very content of the kingly reign of God, and as such the Gospel.

- 2) *The Humanity of God, the christological paradigm shift, reflects and sums up Barth's whole christology and as such advocates the 'low' christology*

It is worth noting that while Barth was talking about the ‘high’ christology in the (CD IV/1) in particular, his consistent emphasis was upon the fact that God *is* for humankind (*Immanuel*) and therefore He made humankind His *partner* in and through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Notably this overriding emphasis reflects exactly upon his later development of the ‘togetherness’ of God in *The Humanity of God*. In probability this would indicate that Barth, consciously or unconsciously, foresaw the direction and the goal of his christology as that which converges to the humanity of God, which is demonstrated in the life-act of the *Royal Man*. What does this debate mean for our thesis? Would it perhaps be an overstatement if we say, that in probability, this indicates that Barth eventually prefigured his christology with , and headed it towards, the significance of the humanity in christology? Presumably this would be an overstatement. Yet we may say that, whereas the former view is taken without knowing its consequences, the latter view is spoken with a clear consciousness and intensity that indicates a knowledge about the crucial nature of the christology ‘from below’. Our observation is shown to be viable when we remember that Barth characterises the lecture of the *Humanity of God* as a ‘revision’ of his early view, indicating that this earlier theology was not completely wrong or contrary to the revised argument.<sup>3</sup>

3) *The life-act of the Royal Man is both the ontic and the noetic ground for Barth's christology*

We have argued that, for Barth, *the* ontic ground of christology is nothing other than the Jesus of Nazareth: ‘... in the one Jesus Christ divine and human essence were and are united’ (CD IV/2, 60; 60-69) Responsible Christian christology is all about this particular being, Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, our knowledge that this particular Jesus of Nazareth is the self-revealed God Himself is possible and actualised only in and through this particular Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>3</sup> Barth, *Humanity of God* 41-42.

Barth acknowledges the impossibility of the union of the divine and human essence in the one person. Yet, according to Barth, it is precisely the *Royal Man* and His life-act that ‘demands’ and ‘forces’ (CD IV/2, 61) the statement of their unity. ‘It [this statement about the uniting] does not derive from a known *a priori*, a superior possibility, but only from the given actuality, from Himself [*Royal Man*],’ (CD IV/2, 62).

The importance of this ground of actuality in connection with our thesis is that Barth’s christology is not a Logos concept or a claimed divinity ‘from above’, but the particular man, Jesus of Nazareth. The divinity of Jesus Christ is discussed *in and through the humanity* of Jesus Christ, the *Royal Man*. We must be clear enough that what Barth meant by the divine self-revelation is no other than this *Royal Man*. That is why Barth clarifies that the doctrine of the Trinity, which is for him the ontology of christology, is nothing but an *exposition of revelation*. So Moltmann aptly writes that Barth developed the doctrine of the Trinity ‘from the concrete form of (biblical) revelation,’ the Godhead Jesus Christ, rather than from the logic of the concept of revelation.<sup>4</sup>

No doubt Barth’s constant argument was that we cannot think of the humanity of Christ apart from His divinity. Nevertheless, if we take the *Humanity of God* seriously as the theological and, as such, *christological* paradigm shift from the divinity of Christ to the humanity of Christ, Barth’s early argument must be understood differently. He is not talking of an abstract God, but he speaks of *the* God who cannot be thought of apart from the *humanity* in christology, the christology ‘from below’.

Admittedly, this paradigm shift is meant to be one of the bases for our thesis. But specifically speaking, what Barth highlights with the paradigm of the *Humanity of God* is the *indispensability* of the humanity with divinity. So he uses such concepts as ‘immanuel,’ ‘togetherness,’ ‘partner,’ ‘covenant *mutually* contracted,’ ‘concreteness,’ ‘enclosure,’ ‘freedom for love,’ and the ‘oneness’ of

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<sup>4</sup> Moltmann sees this change as necessary since Christian belief must begin with ‘the concrete and specific’ revelation, Jesus Christ (Moltmann, *Trinity and Kingdom* 141-142).

humiliation, exaltation, transcendence, and immanence.<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, it is important to note the fact that Barth persistently weaves these critical concepts, which highlight much more about the 'from below' aspect of christology in comparison with his early emphasis on the 'wholly otherness' of God ('God is in heaven and you are on earth'), alongside the emphasis on the divine action 'from above'. Not only does he do this in his christology and in *The Humanity of God*, but he also does it in the doctrine of God, and especially in the election of grace even before the christology and *The Humanity of God*. The gist of *The Humanity of God* is that God does not exist without humanity. Christologically speaking, this means that the christology 'from above' (the divinity of Christ) does not, and therefore cannot exist, apart from the christology 'from below' (the humanity of Christ). Surprisingly, such a significant point is reiterated throughout Barth's christology (CD IV/1-3), and in the second volume of christology (CD IV/2) in particular. In this way, Barth's christological contention and tenor reflect in many ways the *Humanity of God*, and this reflection in turn means *The Humanity of God* illuminates the whole christology of Barth, and as such it is the *sum* of his christology. Moreover, it is very significant to remember that Barth wrote the christology 'from below' (CD IV/2) immediately after the lecture of the *Humanity of God*. This would, in all probability, imply that Barth's discussion about the life-act of the *Royal Man* is not only the confirmation of the *Humanity of God*, but also a fuller (further) explication of the content of the *Humanity of God*.

In parenthesis, interestingly enough, through an understanding of the crucifixion, Barth constrains us to think that *God the Reconciler* is crucified rather than the man that reconciled us is crucified, in spite of the fact that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was crucified. And this constraint, paradoxically, espouses our thesis, because it highlights the man Jesus of Nazareth, who *is* the only verifiable ground 'from below' for the true divine incarnation 'from above'.

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<sup>5</sup> Barth, *Humanity of God* 45-50.

4) *Barth's christological progression is circular and not lineal*

So that Barth's christology is not distorted, we must always remember that his christological progression is *circular (spiral)*<sup>6</sup> and not lineal; that is, christology explains the Trinity and the Trinity points to the christology, and as such undergirds the whole of christology. This is the case at least when we see Barth's doctrine of the Trinity which is not only about Godhead, but also is essentially the *ontology* of christology, and the orientation of the *Church Dogmatics*. This circular progression implies, first of all, that we cannot simply say that Barth's christology is a christology 'from above', because the term 'from above' is more of a vertical conception. At the same time, as the word 'from' also entails the counter word 'to' (from - to), the label 'from above' is more of a lineal conception, from one direction to the other direction.

In contrast, Barth's christology is framed on a circular movement; trinitarian hermeneutic, and not on a lineal movement. To put this in Barth's orientation, the Son of God goes into the far country (incarnation 'from above') (CD IV/1), the Son of Man the *Royal Man* returns home (exaltation 'from below') (CD IV/2), and then the *Royal Man*, who is *the* dual manifestation and Integrator of the two, binds them together and witnesses to these as the 'two movement in one action' in and through the work of the Holy Spirit (CD IV/3.1). In such a way, Barth's christology can hardly be seen as a kind of one-sided movement, as if his christology is all about 'from above', but it can be seen as a *circular correspondence* in which neither the 'above' nor the 'below' are diminished or even dissolved into the other at the expense of this or that element of christology. Again, with regard to cor-respondence, we should not fail to appreciate the *Christian Life* (the fragmentary of the *Church Dogmatics* IV/3.2) which realistically speaking 'ends' Barth's whole dogmatics with an emphasis upon *human* responsibility ('from below') in *cor-respond-ence* to the divine act of salvation 'from above'.

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<sup>6</sup> To use a more general term for circular, *viz.* trinitarian hermeneutics, Barth's whole dogmatic is composed of 'dialectical-dialogical' language or thought (McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* 12-13).



5) *Interpretation (meaning) presupposes fact, the methodic precedence is a matter of procedural priority*

We must not underestimate the criticality of the 'from above' element in Barth's christology. However, at this juncture, we need to remember Barth's constant emphasis that his christology never speaks in possibility but in *actuality*. The importance of this emphasis lies in the subsequent implication that *fact* ('low') *precedes interpretation* ('high'). For the emphasis on 'not in possibility but in actuality' suggests to us that fact is *presupposed* before interpretation, reflection, or meaning. Surely, if fact is to be understood as fact it, entails interpretation. Fact (something) could be non-fact (nothing) and therefore it could be irrelevant or meaningless without understanding through interpretation. This is the case particularly in our existential epistemology, since we understand as much as we know, and fact is fact as much as we know fact as fact. Interpretation involves a dialectic process, a circular (chain) process of negation and affirmation: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Yet if understanding fact depends too heavily on interpreting the meaning of fact, then meaning would totally differ from fact, since fact is left behind meaning. Fact would become merely a victim of meaning in the chain of negation and affirmation process. So if interpretation concentrate too heavily on pursuing meaning without constant (consistent) reference to its fact, then meaning would easily become either meaningless or irrelevant to fact. Analogically speaking, again, whereas interpretation or meaning could be compared to the 'high' christology, fact could be compared to the 'low' christology. This implies, at least for Barth, that the 'high' christology has hardly any constitutional importance in building a responsible christology outside this 'low' christology. For this reason, Barth undergirds this 'high' christology in terms of this 'low' christology, the life-act of the *Royal Man*. Strictly speaking, then, we will have to understand Barth giving precedence to the meaning ('from above') over the description of the fact ('from below') as not promoting such as a 'high' christology, but as a *procedural priority* in his dogmatic scheme. To wit, the 'from above' does not finish within itself, but points beyond itself, that is, to the 'from below'.

Differently put, christology 'from above' was *necessary* in order to establish christology. The christological movement 'from above' to 'below' clarifies who the Subject and the Initiator of christology is. However, the christology 'from above' alone is *not sufficient* for the actuality and the reality of christology (reconciliation). Christology 'from below' was crucial as it puts the christology 'from above' into action. Logically, if the necessity of 'high' christology is going to be the true necessity, then the necessity will necessarily entail a certain actuality. For necessity will vindicate itself to be truly necessity only by actualising itself. Barth's christology sees this necessity (incarnation 'from above') in the actuality (the historical life-act of the *Royal Man* 'from below'). As such, while the 'from above' envisions the 'from below', the 'from below' vindicates the 'from above'. That is to say, for Barth, any *responsible* Christian christology must be anchored not only in the 'from above', but also in the 'from below', because this alone will safeguard christology from becoming either a mere idolised anthropology or a mere speculative Christ-myth.

(6) Last but not the least, describing Barth's christology as a christology 'from above' in view of his early rejection of natural theology, will simply lose its tenability as Barth clearly dis-closes a new vista for natural theology.

In conclusion, if we insist on Barth having a 'high' christology, then this insistence would be a sheer distortion of Barth's christology, and therefore would fail to have a proper appreciation of his thought. For this view is nothing but a maximisation of one aspect (the 'from above' which is in the framework of the priestly office and work!) at the expense of the rest: the kingly and prophetic office and work which are developed overridingly in the framework of the 'from below'.

If we acknowledge a proper appreciation of Barth's christology to the extent that the 'from below' is the constitutive part of his christology as well as the 'from above', what then is the theological significance of our sensing or rediscovering this 'from below'? Additionally, is this 'from below' christology exempt from any problems or dangers? In reality, there are problems and dangers in maintaining the christology 'from below' no matter how vital that is.

#### 4. Problems<sup>7</sup> in Maintaining the Christology 'from below'

(1) When we follow Barth's view of the movement 'from man to God,' the exaltation of the Son of Man to the Son of God, as one of our categories for the christology 'from below', then this view certainly entails the problem of 'divinising humanity' as Barth also noted in explicating the christology 'from below' in *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 (3-20). If the Son of Man revealed Himself as the Son of God through the exaltation, and all humankind are also exalted through this exaltation, then it would imply that we human beings could also become like the

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<sup>7</sup> For some other general problems in establishing the christology 'from below' see (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 244-250; 'A Dilemma in Christology' in: *The Expository Times* Vol. 76. (1964-1965), pp. 207-210; Calvert, *From Christ to God* 8-17).

But Hodgson sees some problems in both 'from above' and 'from below'. So he proposes a 'word-christology' to solve the christological impasse, arguing that the advocates of the 'Logos-flesh' christology did not sufficiently explore the root of the concept 'word.' 'Logos' was regarded as a personal agent, initiated in Hellenistic Judaism, and encouraged by Arianism. The problem of such personification of the Logos is that when the personal Logos comes in the person of Jesus, the humanity of Jesus would become a subordinate personal agent to the person of the Logos, if indeed the transcendence of God (Logos) should be maintained at all. But the ancient terms for 'person' (*persona*, *prosopon*, *hypostasis*) did not mean 'person' in the modern sense of a conscious individual, but 'mask (*persona*)' or 'face' or 'countenance (*prosopon*)'. These terms came to denote 'functioning entity' or 'individuating principle.' Word is not a 'personal' agency but it is the 'power' or 'event' that 'constitutes' personhood. Therefore the *logos* (word) of God should not be regarded as a divine hypostasis, *humanum*. Rather God exists in three 'modes of being' or "modes of relationship."

The 'word of God' transcends and confronts humanity, but it comes to speak and act, in fully human words and actions, in Jesus of Nazareth. For although Jesus was fully human, God was present *in virtue of His faithful word of witness to God's word*. When the word of the humanity of Jesus was 'finished' in Him, God's word-presence in the world was 'definitively' established in Him. So in Jesus of Nazareth, the word of God and the word of humanity are not two qualitatively distinct substances or natures, but they become '*homologous*' with each other. Where human presence is accomplished as a presence to oneself and to the world 'by faith,' there God Himself is present because His word is the source and power of human presence, just as humanity's enacted word becomes the essential means in making God's future word present here and now in the world. This is possible because *word is the 'medium' of presence*. This ending of the humanity and the definitive presence of God in Jesus should be understood as the 'proleptic' of a final and perfect co-presence of God and the world, which is anticipated in the consummation. As for Hodgson, this view of 'word' as the 'medium' of the co-presence of God and humanity, overcomes 'the abstract distinction between divine and human 'natures' entirely, avoiding both the supernaturalism of the traditional Logos-flesh christologies and the subjectivism of modern anthropologically-oriented christologies, and preserving the finitude and historicity of human experience' (Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence. An Essay in Christology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], pp. 65-71). This understanding of word as 'medium of presence' leads him to recover the meaning of the 'Logos' in tradition in terms of *Word as the Medium of Presence* (*ibid.*, 60-135) and this is what he develops throughout the book entitled as *Jesus-Word and Presence* (*ibid.*, 1-291).

*Royal Man*, both God and man. For if He is truly like us, this likeness can hardly exclude the rest of the human beings from becoming like Him, both God and man, even though Barth clearly notes that this exaltation is by no means a divinisation of humanity, but humanity's 'perfect fellowship' with divinity. Likewise, establishing a christology 'from below' upon the earthly life-act of the *Royal Man* will have to cope with the problem of identifying the human life of Jesus with the very life of God Himself.

(2) Epistemologically too, if we insist that we can see and acknowledge the divinity by looking at the man Jesus and thus can build a christology 'from below', then it also becomes extremely difficult to distinguish the divinity and the humanity from each other. Do we know that the particular Jesus is God because the man shows and tells us His divinity, or do we know it because the divinity reveals and tells the humanity of Christ?<sup>8</sup>

(3) Paradoxically, the danger of divinising humanity also implies the fact that the christology 'from below' could easily become an ebionite christology in which the divinity of Christ is denied, regarding Jesus as merely an ordinary human being. We see the example of this problem in Paul of Samosata when he employed the phrase 'from below' in his exposition of a christology based on the ordinary human nature of Jesus. Christology may become Jesuology, so to speak.<sup>9</sup>

(4) Holding a christology 'from below' will find its difficulty as we argue that Barth's christology is a christology 'from below' in the sense that Barth builds his christology on the basis of the historical Jesus. For it is unanimously agreed that we know too little about Jesus<sup>10</sup>, even though 'the general character of his life is rightly portrayed in them [New Testament], on the basis of historical recollec-

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<sup>8</sup> Calvert is not convinced by R.P.C. Hanson's claim that 'through his humanity his divinity can be perceived' (*The Attractiveness of God* [SPCK 1973], p. 109; Calvert, *From Christ to God* 6, fn. 15).

<sup>9</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (Mowbrays, 1975), p. 165.

<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless we must still ask how much of our knowledge about Jesus is necessary to enable us to affirm the historical Jesus, in order for Him to carry the mass of theological significance of the 'low' christology (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 8).

tion,'<sup>11</sup> and the Gospel stories are re-presented differently from one another, according to the aim of each book.

(5) Claiming Barth's christology as a christology 'from below' in terms of the historical life-act of the *Royal Man* being *the* dual manifestation of both 'high' and 'low' christology will face the problem of classifying what is divinity and what is humanity, *viz.* in terms of the physical *vs.* the metaphysical, or in terms of a miraculous act.

(6) If we contend that a responsible christology must build on a concrete ground instead of an abstract concept, and therefore we should build a christology 'from below' on the basis of the concrete life-act of Christ, then we are in danger of confining christology to the actuality (phenomenon) which could easily overlook the fact that the being and power of Christ (potentiality) is more than the actual witnesses of the Scripture about His actualised being and act, earthly ministry (actuality).<sup>12</sup>

(7) Insisting upon a christology 'from below' on the basis of the true humanity of Christ and thus on the normality, (His likeness to us), of the humanity of Christ, then the question of its uniqueness (distinctiveness) arises.<sup>13</sup> Without His uniqueness there could hardly be any significance in dealing with christology. If we maintain a christology 'from below' from the human side, then what is so

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<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968<sup>2</sup> [=1963]), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Here we see a tension between the possibility and actuality. According to the Aristotelian view, nothing exists in essence unless it exists in actuality. But Jüngel argues that the Christian epistemology is not based in the actuality but in the possibility, since Christian epistemology commences with the divine act of *Creatio ex nihilo*. As God *can* (*ex nihilo*) do anything, actuality (*Creatio*) is no more than a part of this possibility. It is necessary for Christians to hold the primacy of possibility over actuality in our scientific world because, whereas our scientific world tends to measure everything only on the basis of actuality, *viz.* provability, faith, by which Christians primarily live, is that which goes beyond scientific positivism or actuality (Eberhard Jüngel, 'The World as Possibility and Actuality,' [1972<sup>2</sup>] in: *Theological Essays* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989<sup>2</sup>], pp. 95-123). See also (Simon Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism? Barth's Earliest Theology and the Marburg School*, [Oxford University Press, 1988], pp. 48-56).

<sup>13</sup> (E.L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ* [London: SPCK 1977], p. 133). Whereas Calvert does not see it as a problem because advocating the 'low' christology is often preoccupied with the need to assert his manhood in lieu of considering the question of the unity of the human and the divine as a critical issue (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 10).



special about this human being is that His disciples became convinced that He was God in the flesh? Describing Jesus Christ as a purely human being without applying any God-language (divinity) would result in idolatry however laudable, since the word 'christology' entails something which is more than merely a human being which transcends to a new level like 'Godmanhood.'<sup>14</sup> To signify the christology 'from below' mainly by the humanity of Christ fails to appreciate that in this step of using God-language, this christology 'from below' means mainly that it would fall into adoptionism. For the christology 'from below' indicates that that particular human being is chosen and adopted for a certain christological task among humankind.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, to ground Christian christology in the humanity of Christ without His divinity would lead to a difficulties in discovering an

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<sup>14</sup> (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 244, 248-249). According to Macquarrie, we need to use God-language in understanding Christ, because it is not enough to say that in Christ we saw a new level of humanity as people recognised and confessed Christ as God. Using God-language about Jesus also implies that this unique human life is not an accident or an anomaly of history, but is the very meaning of history, its goal and rationale: 'The same creative love that we see in Christ is the divine Source of all things. It is at this point that the human approach to Christology demands to be supplemented by the incarnational approach. For to claim that the man Jesus shows forth Godmanhood is to acknowledge with St Paul that all this from God or with St John that the Word expressed in Jesus is the Word present in the beginning through whom all things were made' (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 249).

'The more christology insists on the humanity of Jesus, the greater is the need for that humanity to be qualified in some way. For without some such qualification, or assertion of specialness, the humanity of Jesus could not sustain the universal role that Christian theology has assigned to it' (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 9; cf. E.L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ* [SPCK, 1977], p. 133).

Facing this question of the uniqueness of the humanity of Christ some propose a 'transcendent anthropology' as a possibility: humanity and God do not have fixed natures infinitely apart but human beings transcend towards God, and Christ is the point at which the two come together; in which the universal role of Christ stands (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 9; Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 246).

<sup>15</sup> Yet Macquarrie holds the possibility and legitimacy of the 'from below up' christology by relying on Rahner's 'transcendental anthropology,' that is, that human beings can and actually do transcend themselves and opens themselves towards God (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 243).

However, here we see an irony of Macquarrie's argument. For this transcendence of all humankind implies that *any* human being could have been *adopted* to be the Christ. So Macquarrie's dependence on Rahner's transcendental anthropology as the possible and legitimate foundation for the 'bottom-up' christology revolves around the problem of becoming an adoptionist christology, *in spite of* his warning against such an adoptionism. Moreover, this transcendental view would undermine the *uniqueness* of Christ, which would lead even to the *trustworthiness* of His 'Christ-ship'. See (Macquarrie, *The Humanity of Christ* 246, 248-249).

objective uniqueness and special value of Christ, and therefore to believe in Christ alone in comparison with other great religious or non-religious figures.

(8) Grounding the christology 'from below' exclusively in that particular life-act of the *Royal Man* would confront the problem of transition from then and there, to here and now. Rationally it is difficult to see how the particular *human* life-act could effectively overarch this time and spatial distance.<sup>16</sup> Pannenberg insists this is feasible through the resurrection of Jesus since it is the historical event.<sup>17</sup> But there is a controversy about whether or not the resurrection is a historical event, and therefore it becomes unclear whether such christology is still 'from below'.

(9) If we argue that a responsible Christian christology should base itself on the concrete life-act of Jesus Christ, supposing this christology as one 'from below', then this christology itself would be in great danger of becoming a kind of exemplary, social, revolutionary or moral teaching. His life-act could be understood as that of an ancient wonder-maker or magician. In short, christology may easily

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<sup>16</sup> Some sought an alternative metaphysics from the collapse of traditional metaphysics as a result of the development of modern science, the evolutionary world-view, indeterminism, and relativity.

We see some examples of the sought after alternative metaphysics: (Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality; an essay in cosmology*, [University of Edinburgh Press, c. 1929]); Charles Hartshorne, *The Reality of God* [Yale University Press, 1948]; *Philosophers Speak of God* [Chicago University Press, 1953], esp. chap I; *Reality as Social Process* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1953], esp. chaps VI-IX; For a brief note on process philosophy see (W. Norman Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, [James Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1959], pp. 146-175, esp. 169-175; *Process Thought and Christian Faith*, [New York: James Nisbet & Macmillan Company, 1968]; Paul Tillich's Spirit christology in *Systematic Theology* Vol. 3 [Nisbet 1964] pp. 303, 153; Vol. 2 p. 156; Vol. 1, p. 151; Teilhard de Cahrudin, *Science and Christ*, [Collins, 1968], pp. 34ff.) in which the significance of Christ is seen not only in the humanity of Christ but in the framework of the relationship between creation and incarnation in terms of the cosmic Christ; Norman Hook, 'A Spirit Christology' in: *Theology* 75 (1972), pp. 226-232; Karl Rahner's the *self-transcendence of human nature*; G.W.H. Lampe, 'The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ' in: *Christ, Faith, and History*, p. 115; *God as Spirit* [Clarendon Press, 1977]; See also J.B. Cobb & D.R. Griffin, *Process Theology*, [Christian Journals, 1977], p. 105; David Arthur Pailin, 'Incarnation as a Continuing Reality' in: *Religious Studies* 16 [1980], p. 303; *God and the Process of Reality. foundations of a credible theism* [London: Routledge, 1989]. Such an alternative attempt seems 'very serious, even drastic, modifications in our theological pattern' (Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* 17). For a brief summary see also (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 20-31).

<sup>17</sup> Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 189.

become a christian morality or ethic which would accordingly ethicise or moralise<sup>18</sup> the Gospel and the kingly rule of God.

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<sup>18</sup> We see an example of altercation in this regard. Ebeling accuses Barth of ethicising Christian truth by *objectifying* Christian faith in terms of Christian *deeds* (Gerhard Ebeling, 'Begriffsuntersuchungen - Textinterpretationen - Wirkungsgeschichte' in: *Lutherstudien* Vol. III [1985], pp. 557-558). According to Ebeling, Barth holds that the Christian act of faith has to be verified in its corresponding deeds. And, because of the necessity of verification, dogmatics must be implemented by ethics. Ebeling further asserts that Barth's theology derives from very definite or rigid ('*schnurgerade*') political conclusions of Christ (*ibid.*, 567, Ebeling quotes Barth's term from the *KD* II/1, 434, 477). Hence, Ebeling disputes that, for Barth, ethics not only might impose or overshadow the theme of the certainty of our salvation but also 'transform the Gospel into ethics' ('*Die Transformation des Evangeliums in das Ethische*' (*ibid.*, 551). Willis also agrees along with Ebeling (Robert E. Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth* [1971], pp. 80-81, 428, 438-439).

However, this charge is highly questionable for the following reason. Barth suggests that Jesus Christ is not really concerned with the cause of suffering, but only with suffering itself. That is to say He *did* something for those who were in need of help (*CD* IV/2, 232; *KD* 257). Yet Ebeling seems to misinterpret Barth's discussion by stating that his only emphasis was on Jesus' action or deed itself. However the meaning of Barth's discussion is rather the opposite. What he meant was to highlight the *precedence of divine love over Law or ethics or morality* in spite of His radical challenge to the world. We must not overlook the fact that Barth spelled out that Jesus' prior concern was with human misery in the light of the kingly rule of God, which is the content of the Gospel, in which any moralistic understanding of the Gospel is entirely repudiated. Ahler agrees with our view by rejecting Ebeling and Willis' accusation. See (Rolf Ahler, *The Community of Freedom* [1989], pp. 219-240).

Even more significantly, it is important to note Barth's location of the revolutionary life-act of the *Royal Man*. As we discussed, Barth places this dimension of deed and act (kingly office) (*CD* IV/2) *in between* the dimension of religion; the completion of human salvation in and through the incarnation and crucifixion (priestly office) (*CD* IV/1), and the constant witness to, and proclamation of, these kingly and priestly events (prophetic offices) (*CD* IV/3).

We argued that the life-act of the *Royal Man* (kingly office) is the pivotal centre in Barth's christology. But if this particular and concrete life-act is emphasised so much as to become the centre of it, then there would also be a danger that it would become his christology, an ethics, or moralism. And this danger becomes even greater since Barth deals with Christian ethics within the framework of dogmatics. Specifically speaking, Barth places Christian ethics under the doctrine of God (*CD* II/2) which he calls a 'general' ethics, and under the doctrine of creation (*CD* III/4) and reconciliation, *viz.* christology (*CD* IV/4) which he calls 'special' ethics. Whereas the former focuses on the command of God, the latter is concerned with a human response to the command of God.

In parenthesis, of course, Barth's reason for this locus is clear. By definition, the theme of theology is primarily human beings talking about the being and act of God, and not of humanity, nature, etc. Yet since God acted for human redemption and thus it became totally *renewed*, it can no longer insist on being its own master. Christian ethics therefore should be discussed in the light of the Word of God, that is for Barth Jesus Christ, and not in any general principles or anthropology. If Christian ethics claims to be an independent discipline outside dogmatics, Christian ethics would cease to be so, but would instead be a general ethics or anthropology. 'Dogmatics has no option: it has to be ethics as well. ... Dogmatics itself is ethics; and ethics is also dogmatics' (*CD* I/2, 793, cf. 362-454, esp. 362-371; *CD* II/2, 513-515). So Christian ethics is only a 'predicate' to the Subject, dogmatics. In short, Christian ethics is an integral element of dogmatics, *i.e.*, christology. See (Barth, *Christian Life* 3-4, *CD* I/2, 791-794; *CD* II/2, 522).

To return to our initial attention of the significance of Barth's location of this revolutionary

However, answering our initial question as to whether our elaboration is an unnecessary task (p. 3), we underline the fact that establishing the christology 'from below' is so vital since only *this* content would be *the hermeneutical filter* for the *responsible* Christian christology in spite of many problems and dangers in establishing the christology 'from below'.

### 5. The Life-act of Jesus 'from below' as *the Hermeneutical Filter* for Responsible Christology and Theology

We have seen that for Barth the term *Immanuel* is the sum of his christology, and the ground of this summary is the concrete person Jesus Christ. Yet, if we are really to understand what Barth means by the *concrete* name Jesus Christ, we have no choice but to contemplate the two critical terms, life and act (CD IV/1, 18). For if we stipulate that the term 'person' is attributed only to a living being, then our holistic understanding of the person's name must be identified only with its life-act. So Barth delineates the concrete name Jesus Christ in the light of this

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life-act, however, we acknowledge that he seems to reject either moralising the Gospel or abstracting the power of the Gospel, by placing such a central content in the middle of the two other offices (priestly and prophetic). The Gospel is concrete and powerful, and hence it is not an 'idle intellectual frivolity,' but entails concrete praxis (CD I/2, 787). At the same time, however this issue of Christian praxis should by no means overshadow the freeing power of the Gospel, because the indicative that 'You *are already* the children of God' definitively and always precedes the imperative that 'Therefore you should live like His children'. Christian ethics should not be entangled within any kind of legalism, but rather it should tell us who we were, and are (CD II/2, 512). Thence Christian ethics is 'evangelical ethics' (Barth, 'The Gift of Freedom: The Foundation of Evangelical Ethics,' [1953] in: *The Humanity of God* [1960 [=1956], p. 86). Further, it seems most likely that Barth discusses the humanity (life-act) of Christ in a chiasmic way, the *humanity* of Christ in terms of His *divine* form (the kingly rule of God), and the *divinity* of Christ in terms of His *human* form (incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection), in an attempt to avoid any kind of ethicising about the Gospel. The word 'ethics' presupposes a certain demarcation between good and evil. And since Christians confess the *goodness* of God, christology could avoid any accusation of becoming an ethics or morality only when this good God is integrated into this christology. Nonetheless, Ramm criticises Barth: 'By keeping ethics and Christology so close, Barth goes along way toward preventing the church, in its ethical witnesses, as appearing only moralistic, only prudish, only interested in principles and not people' (Bernard Ramm, *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology* [Sanfrancisco: Harper and Row, 1983], p. 150).



‘historical’ life-act. What does this tell us?

We mentioned that for Barth the life-act of the *Royal Man* (‘from below’) is the sole Integrator of the ‘from above’. This understanding is a result of a *Sachkritik* of what Barth said. But we now ask what that means, because theology is more than a mere descriptive science of what is. Instead theology also pursues the meaning of what is.

It is known that for Barth the crucifixion is the most concrete manifestation of the ‘what?’ of *Deus pro nobis*. But it is important to recognise that this ‘what?’ is further and specifically elaborated in terms of the ‘how?’ which is represented in terms of the *Royal Man*.<sup>19</sup> By definition, christology is human reflection upon

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<sup>19</sup> By describing christology ‘from above’ rather in terms of the life-act of the *königliche Mensch*, which is developed in the light of the historical reality, Barth indicates the importance of both ‘what’ Jesus said and did, and ‘how’ He spoke and acted. This implies that, for Barth, the christology ‘from below’, that is, the ‘how christology’ is as equally important as the ‘what christology’, that is, the christology ‘from above’.

Since Karl Barth, the christology ‘from below’ is initiated by post-Bultmannians (Ernst Käsemann, ‘The Problem of the Historical Jesus’ [1953] in: *Essays on the New Testament Themes* [SCM Press, 1964], pp. 15-47), and then theologically articulated and developed by (Ernst Fuchs, ‘Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus’ in: *ZTK* LIII [1956], pp. 210-229; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* [1957 [=1960]] trans. Irene & Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson [London & Southhampton: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960=1963], pp. 13-232; J.M. Robinson’s review of this book in *JBL* LXXVI [1957], pp. 310-313; Gerhard Ebeling, ‘Word of God and Hermeneutic’ (1959) in: *The New Hermeneutic. New Frontiers in Theology* Vol. II, ed. J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb [New York and London: Harper and Row, 1964]).

For the overall development of the ‘old’, the ‘new’, and the ‘third quest’ of the historical Jesus see (Martin Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche biblische Christus* [2te erweiterte und erläuterte Auflage. Photomechanischer Druck Leipzig: A Dreichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D Werner Scholl, 1928]; Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: a critical study of its progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery [London & C. Black, 1954], pp. 1-401, esp. 396-401; Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* [New York: Charles and Scribner’s Sons, 1958]; Ernst Käsemann, *The Problem of Historical Jesus* [1953]; Ernst Fuchs, ‘Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus’ in: *ZTK* LIII [1956], pp. 210-229; ‘The New Testament and Hermeneutical Problem’ in: *The New Hermeneutic* [1964], pp. 111-145; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* [1957]; Gerhard Ebeling, ‘Word of God and Hermeneutic’ in: *The New Hermeneutic* [1959], pp. 78-110; J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, studies in biblical theology* No. 25 [SCM Press, 1959], pp. 9-125; ‘Hermeneutic Since Barth’ in: *The New Hermeneutic* [SCM Press, 1964], pp. 1-77; Van A. Harvey & Schubert M. Ogden, ‘How New is the “New Quest of the Historical Jesus”?’ in: *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ. Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964], pp. 197-242; William Hamilton, *A Quest for the Post-Historical Jesus* [SCM Press, 1993], pp. 1-288; Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels. The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* [New York, Oxford, Singapore, & Sydney, 1993]; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: the life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991])



the particular Jesus Christ, and naturally therefore christology asks concerning Jesus' identity and act. For Barth, this particular Jesus Christ is the revelation of God's being. But how do we know this? The question of the ability to know is substantially dealt with in the light of the doctrine of God (CD I/1-2) rather than in his christology. But now Barth resumes the question of this ability to know God in the light of christology. According to Barth, we know God only if we are witnesses to His *act, Immanuel*, which is the 'attestation' and 'report' of the 'life and act of God' as the One who is (CD IV/1, 6-7). Here the term witness and life-act is a significant point for our thesis. By the life-act of God Barth means the *Royal Man*. Barth affirms that the life-act of the *Royal Man*, the historical life-act of Jesus, is the concrete manifestation of His self-revelation, love, freedom, and sovereignty. This life-act of the *Royal Man*, the Son of Man, is what Barth signifies when he says that Christians speak of God and believe in Him in terms of the *concrete* name Jesus Christ. We are well aware of Barth's *theological* axiom that we can know God only when He reveals Himself. But what Barth says at the moment is that the ability to know God comes from our witness to (of) His life-act. He means by this that the divine self-revelation is not sufficient for a proper knowledge of God. This is because human beings are *homo sapiens*. In addition the so-called 'divine self-revelation' is such an ambiguous concept that it could be manipulated by the capacity of human reasoning according to either its personal interest, perceptibility or image of it. To a certain extent, we accept Rahner's view that human beings are dynamic and therefore they always attempt to transcend themselves towards mysterious objects, including God. However, for this very reason of human ability of transcendence, we cannot, and thus do not, build our christology upon humanity's nature of transcendence, or experiences. For human nature of transcendence also implies that it can manipulate christology, and its experiences are such diversities to understand and are thus obscure grounds upon

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which is called the 'third quest' of the historical Jesus, attempted by using a socio-economic method of profiling Him. For a survey of the recent development of the historical Jesus see (Charles Wanamaker, 'The Historical Jesus Today' in: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* [March 1996, No. 94], pp. 3-17).

which to base the responsible christology. Also, as we recognise human beings' limitation, caprice, and sinfulness, they could and would easily misunderstand christology in any form, in spite of their best effort. Therefore, it is crucial to ground 'bottom-up' christology on *the particular life-act* of Christ and on nothing else. If this were not the case, human beings could use God as an excuse for their wrong doings whatever and whenever necessary, for their justification of the *status quo* of their unjust status, for their exploitation, for their immorality etc. For this reason, we suppose, Barth further develops, and as such concretises, the divine self-revelation by this particular life-act of the *Royal Man*. Indeed, Barth draws a correspondence between the self-revealing God and this particular life-act in order to safeguard this self-revealing God from any misunderstanding and from misuse of God's being. This matter of correspondence and safeguard provides us with the vital insight that the question of christology is fundamentally the question of *Theology*.<sup>20</sup> This implies that human understanding of God will always have to be shaped and challenged by this life-act of the *Royal Man*, the christology 'from below', and not the other way around. Therefore, *if we seek a responsible and relevant christology, our christological reflection has necessarily to be filtered out through our consistent reference*<sup>21</sup> *to this concrete foundation*. As such the

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<sup>20</sup> If a study of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth is to be christological, the question of His humanity is not merely a historical or anthropological matter, but a theological one for the function of christology is ultimately theological. The distinction between christology 'from above' and 'from below' has important theological conclusions if christology is ultimately a matter of Theology. The major reason is that contemporary christology does not conceive itself as a tool of theology, and therefore does not investigate the theological implications of its approach. A criticism on the christology 'from below' and the rejection of nature language is that they tend to reduce the divine Son of God to a mere human being, his ontological divinity is reduced to an adjectival divinity. Much modern christology has done little to restore its *theological* framework. Christology has no theological value without theological framework. 'For only a christology which recognizes God in Christ, whether it starts from below or above, is able to have theological influence, that is, able to influence our understanding of God' (Calvert, *From Christ to God* 10, 17). This emphasis on christology's *theological* function in parenthesis is the major crux in Calvert's book on the whole. Much modern christology is in danger of neglecting its theological role, in contrast to the significant fact that the Chalcedonian definition is operative in the theological scene.

<sup>21</sup> This is why Jüngel articulates that dogmatic should be consisted in consistent exegesis: '*dass Dogmatik konsequente Exegese ist*' ('dogmatic is consistent exegesis') (Eberhard Jüngel, *Gottes Sein ist im Werden: Verantwortliche Rede vom Sein Gottes bei Karl Barth* 3. Auflage. *Um einen Anhang erweitert* [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1976], p. 123). Originally, this notion of

christology 'from below' (which is for Barth the life-act of the *Royal Man*) is crucial as *the hermeneutical filter*, not only for Barth himself, but for all of us.

We must note that this *Royal Man* being the constant challenge and the consistent reference to shaping our christology, is exactly what Barth highlighted about four decades ago in his commentary on the *Römerbrief*. In such a way, the *Royal Man*'s ever challenging life-act *cor-responds* to his *early* understanding of God. We stress the word 'early' because Barth's early understanding of God was grounded overwhelmingly in the divine self-revelation 'from above' *par excellence*. But now, by recapitulating this God of the self-revelation 'from above' in such a way of *cor-respond-ence* with the life-act of the *Royal Man* 'from below', Barth significantly informs us that his christology cannot, and therefore does not, stand on the christology 'from above' alone, but stands *in response to* the christology 'from below'. Barth's christology consists in such a reciprocal way that whereas the 'from above' points to the 'from below', the 'from below' responds to the 'from above'.

In conforming to this decisiveness of the 'from below' constituency in any responsible christology as being the hermeneutical filter, we need to deal with Moltmann and Tracy's views of the 'from above-from below' issue.

### 1) *Confronting Moltmann and Tracy's view of the 'high-low' issue*

Moltmann supposes that the issue of the christology 'from above-from below' is a matter of 'appearance' because the two elements are already coiled in the Christian christology itself. However, the theological implications of the paradigm either 'from above' or 'from below' is far more significant than its being merely a matter of 'appearance.' Further, for Tracy, the paradigm 'from above' and

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'*konsequente Exegese*' is part of Jüngel's programme of 'paraphrasing' Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. By paraphrasing it in terms of *Gottes Sein ist im Werden* ('God's Being is in Becoming'), Jüngel justifies this title, supposing a good summary of Barth's understanding of God which is grounded in his constant explication of, and reference to, the *one* Word of God (*ibid.*, p. viii).

'from below' is complex to define for two reasons. *First*, although 'high' christology proposes a 'modern psychologizing' of the ontological high christology of Chalcedon and the Johannine Logos tradition, it still hinges on the central assumption of 'low' christology, that is, that only fact or actualisation secures christological meaning. *Second*, 'low' christology contends its case on the basis of the synoptic accounts of Jesus' words, deeds, and destiny. Yet 'low' christology combines this historical aspect with its meaning, i.e., it pursues the primary relationship between language and existence. Provided this hermeneutic of combination is accepted, the 'new' quest of the historical Jesus which represents 'low' christology results, *still* in a 'psychologizing' of the historical aspect. Thus Tracy rather asks whether the factual status of the Christian affirmation of Jesus as Christ really needs this 'historical-psychological reconstruction.'<sup>22</sup> Surely, a 'new' quest is entirely desirable as a 'strictly exegetical and historical task.'<sup>23</sup> However, if representations are those about fact and not fiction, it is not really necessary to understand Jesus' own consciousness of His words and deeds ('low' christology) in order to formulate a christology grounded in fact. Rather we need to know the *existential meaning* of His life-act and destiny re-presented by our christological affirmation of Jesus as Christ. This necessity of studying the existential meaning of that christological affirmation in terms of its symbolic and re-presentative factual character becomes unmistakable when we seek out some possibly transformative meanings of our christological affirmation in the face of both the presence of evil, and the need for symbolic expressions in our lives.<sup>24</sup>

So far, we basically share Tracy's conviction that the two christological paradigms 'from above' and 'from below' are too complex to define in a clear cut way. This is so because, as we also have seen in our first chapter, the two paradigms are intertwined methodically and epistemologically, and at the same time, their meanings could be also different depending on how we define them. In

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<sup>22</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* 217-218.

<sup>23</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* 233.

<sup>24</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* 217-218.

addition, we basically agree with Moltmann's view of the relationship between the being ('from above') and knowledge ('from below'); that the two are essentially interlocked. The reason is this. *Theoretically* speaking, from an epistemic point of view, being cannot be or is not yet, being unless we know or recognise it as such. Epistemology entails the two realities: perceiving subject and perceived object. This entailment implies the fact that being is *not yet* real being without proper understanding, since being is not perceived as being. At the same time however, from an ontic standpoint, being *is* already being irrespective of our recognition of that being, since ontic being does not relate itself to any question of epistemology or *cognoscendi*. *Practically* speaking, however, it is difficult to separate the two. We know being because it stands as being. Put in Moltmann's argument, in the Christian theology, human knowledge as an *a posteriori* is based upon *factum*, although Being also often turns out to be more than the capacity of our perception. To this extent, Moltmann's view is understandable when he says that the difference between the 'from above' and the 'from below' are only a matter 'appearance.'

Nevertheless, if we concede that the life-act of Christ ('from below') is, and therefore should be, the hermeneutical filter for our responsible and relevant speech of christology, and as such christian doctrine of God, then this paradigmatic issue 'from above' or 'from below' is far more significant than its appearance.

Moltmann's contention that the 'from above' and the 'from below' is a matter of 'appearance' seems to presuppose the fact that we can and are professing the 'same' christology irrespective of the method employed either 'from above' or 'from below', if the particular Jesus of Nazareth is presupposed. For Moltmann, this 'above-below' is either 'from divinity to humanity' or 'from humanity to divinity' in portraying christology. However, this understanding of 'appearance' would become presumptuous if we were to apply this view to the christology of Barth. Why specific revelation then? What are the particularities of Jesus and His life-act at a specific time for? Moltmann's assumption could possibly undermine the power of *revelation* and therefore the *power* of revelation. Is the Christian's faith (worship, prayer, life, and view of God) not decisively shaped by *that* of Jesus



Christ? So Gunton adequately states that 'But whatever the outcome, one thing is clear: in Christology, matters of method and content are closely related: the way a Christology is approached cannot be separated from the kind of Christology that emerges ...'.<sup>25</sup>

Tracy is right when he holds that such a 'historical and psychological reconstruction' of christology is not really necessary if our christological confession ('high' christology) is nothing but a simple re-presentation of fact, the historical Jesus ('low' christology). Nevertheless, such an accurate principle turns out to be a different matter when it is applied in the reality of ecclesiastical history. If we are not mistaken, there was hardly any theologian who doubted the actual existence of Jesus in Palestine. This historicity is affirmed among the viewers of Docetism as they maintained that particular historical Jesus, and among the theologians of the nineteenth century onwards, in spite of their difficulty in reconstructing the history of Jesus. Yet what happened when theologians and Christians did not give constant reference and attention to the life-act of Jesus Christ while concentrating on the meaning of His life-act? Has 'doing theology' not been customarily recognised mainly, or even 'simply' in some case, as an 'intellectual discipline,' so that the power of fact or event (σκαῦνδαλον) itself has more or less succumbed to the interest of meaning? Certainly it is necessary and right to seek interpretation and as such meaning. But has the actual outcome of this necessity and legitimacy not rather turned out to have been an ortho-doxy lacking the ortho-praxis, since the Chalcedon and the Nicaea definition? Consequently, Christianity, which in many

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<sup>25</sup> (Gunton, *Yesterday and Today* 17-18). This criticality of the method of approach must not be confused with our uncompromising contention that methodology should not postulate its being the alpha and omega in judging any content which is in our context, christology. To speak in general, we agree with Moltmann and Tracy that methodology (from divinity to humanity or *vice versa*) would not really be a matter of significance especially when we develop christology with the assumption that 'Jesus is Christ'. Yet, this general agreement is not applicable to the case of Barth's christology in particular. For his christology is not consisted in the approach 'from above' alone, but is consisted *decisively* in *cor-respond-ence* with the approach 'from below'. Moreover, Barth's christological establishment on both methods of approach suggest that the gravity of the approaching method itself is considerably commensurated, not only by its counter approach 'from below', but also by the physical ground of the 'from above'.

ways was influenced and thus shaped by its theology, tended to separate Church from state. Naturally, Church has often been understood as having little interest in the present world but focusing on life after death. Our purpose here is by no means to develop a theology of Church and state, but simply to note how a certain theological *emphasis* could bring such a crucial consequence. If Christian theology could base itself upon both orthodoxy and orthopraxis, then it could stand as a much more relevant science to the modern world instead of becoming an irrelevant matter. Human beings are much more keen on speaking and thinking rather than acting out what they say and think. On this level, the life-act of Jesus Christ, the christology 'from below', would play such a vital role in awakening the importance of praxis alongside understanding. Surely we cannot do everything that we understand, and nor can we understand everything we do. Nevertheless, as we realise that human nature is more keen on talking and thinking about something rather than doing, we will have to stress, and perhaps give priority to, praxis, especially against any forms of injustice.

At this point, we cannot resist the temptation to unveil one reason for characterising Barth's christology as a 'high' christology in conjunction with the vitality of Christian praxis in terms of its relevance to the world. Some theologians like to emphasise Barth's 'high' christology in order to criticise it for being irrelevant in connection with world reality, human rights, oppression, injustice, atrocity, poverty etc. They say that Barth's christology is too optimistic by emphasising that God had already reconciled the world to Himself, in Jesus Christ, irrespective of its recognition or acceptance. God has *already* loved all humankind and therefore has already completed its salvation *irrespective* of its response, or moral and ethical behaviour! Further, as for Barth, the primary concern and task in theology is 'God-talk,' in and through the Word of God, Jesus Christ, rather than the social issues. Consequently, these hermeneutical postures led Barth to develop his christology mainly in terms of the doctrine of reconciliation rather than a more comprehensive christology which would have tackled more effectively the problems of his time such as the massacre of Jews, communism, Russia's invasion of

Hungary etc. Barth thus has merely an 'aristocratic' christology which does not give a proper voice in, and to, world problems. It is true that a considerable part of Barth's christology is occupied with an explication of the *sovereign divine* act, and the primary concern of his theology was with the Word of God. However, accusing Barth of being a 'high' christologist on this basis alone is not fair at all, since we clearly find his counter articulation of the *revolutionary character of Jesus of Nazareth which primarily and therefore obviously stands in the setting of 'low' christology. Barth describes this act 'from below' as nothing but the divine partiality.* In this regard, we cannot fail to see Barth's actual political and social struggle.<sup>26</sup> Surely we may raise questions as to whether or not his struggle was strong and substantial enough in observing the balance between his theology of partiality, and praxis in partiality.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the charge that Barth, as a 'high' christologist should by no means overshadow the unfailing aspect of himself as a 'low' christologist, if his actual engagement in socio-economic and political issues is true, and if we take his note earnestly that his doing theology as a theological professor is by no means doing a different theology from what he did before, but doing the *same* theology in a different form: 'I just did the same thing on another level, the academic level, teaching, talking with students, and so on. This was not

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<sup>26</sup> Some of the examples are: Karl Barth, *Theological Existence Today!* [1933] (London: Hodder & Stoughton); 'Barmen Declaration' [1934] in: *Christians Against Hitler* (ed.) E.H. Robertson, (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 48-52; *The German Church Struggle. Tribulation and Promise* (1938), (Highgate, West Hill, N.6), pp. 1-16; *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland* (London: Gordon & George Hill, 1941); *The Germans and Ourselves* (James Nisbet, 1945); *Against the Stream* [1946-1952] (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954); Barth with Johannes Hamel, *How to Serve in a Marxist Land* (New York: Association Press, 1959).

<sup>27</sup> The following scholars share similar criticisms that Barth did not give sufficient attention to the socio-political and economic problems of his time, in spite of some of his engagement in, and writing of, the Barmen Declaration in 1939. O'Neill even doubts whether Barth really objected to Hitler's regime (John Bowden, *Karl Barth* [SCM Press, 1971], pp. 68-85, cf. 9-24; James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* [New York: The Seabury Press, 1975], p. 117, 127, 145; *Minjung Theology* [London: Zed Press, 1983<sup>2</sup>], p. ix; H. Gollwitzer, 'Kingdom of God and Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth' in: *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, (ed.) Geroge Hunsinger [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976], pp. 104-106, 111; Takatso A. Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers* [Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1983], pp. 191-226, esp. 191-200, 222-226; John C. O'Neill, *The Bible's Authority* [T. & T. Clark, 1991], pp. 266-273).

a real break for me.<sup>28</sup> We do certainly admit that Barth did not develop his christological insight in terms of socio-economic and political justice in full and specific clarity. Yet, to mark Barth as a 'high' christologian without taking this statement seriously, as his principle in doing theology, would be an excessive postulate.<sup>29</sup>

The theological significance of the 'from below' in general could be seen in the relationship between the crucifixion and life-act as well. We saw that, for Barth, the crucifixion, which is definitely the divine act, is the centre of christology alongside the resurrection. But we also found that the ground of this divine act 'from above' was decisively the humanity of Christ 'from below'. Further, it is also helpful to recall Barth's view of simultaneity, that is, that the exaltation begins and is completed *already* in and with the humiliation, and *vice versa*. It is helpful to remember this because we cannot think of, or understand, the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ by only looking at the crucifixion itself. Dogmatically speaking, we may attempt to ponder any theological significance of the crucifixion by turning to the fact that it is the death of God Himself; He who is the Creator of life. We may

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<sup>28</sup> (Karl Barth, *Final Testimonies* [Michigan: Eerdmans, 1977], p. 24). We need, for a fairer evaluation of Barth's christology, to remember his customary visit to prison to preach the Gospels, and his early engagement with Christian socialist movements. Moreover, out of his understanding of the *Gospel*, he criticised the economic system which oppresses the poor. For relevancy, it is worth noting Barth's striking comment that 'Jesus *is* the movement for social justice, and the movement for social justice *is* in the present' ('Karl Barth, Jesus Christ and the Movement for Social Justice' [1911] in: *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* [1976], ed. G. Hunsinger, p. 19). For the details, see 19-45, esp. 19, 21, 25, 27-37, 45 (*ibid*); Barth, *The Christian Community and Civil Community* 173.

Concerning this emphasis on 'social justice,' which is related fundamentally to the question of the relevance of Barth's christology, there is some conflict of opinions as to whether Barth's whole theology is utterly based on socialism (F.W. Marquardt, *Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth* [1972] 47-76); or it is not (H. Diem, *Karl Barth as Socialist: Controversy Over a New Attempt to Understand Him* [1972], 121-138); or whether he shifted the priority from socialism to the Gospel (H. Golwitzer, *Kingdom of God and Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth* [1974], 159-179); or indeed whether his theology has stemmed ultimately from the political question of theory and *praxis* (G. Hunsinger, 'Toward a Radical Barth' [1972], 181-233 in: *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. & trans. G. Hunsinger [1976], pp. 19-236; cf. J. D. Smart, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence 1914-1925* [1964], p. 28).

<sup>29</sup> So McLean states that if Barth lived today, 'he would have been present among and listening to the outcasts from the Black and the Third World communities' (Stuart McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* 3, cf. 62-67).

unanimously say that the crucifixion is one of the most horrible, brutal, and painful executions. But so what? If we single out the crucifixion of Jesus from the context of His whole life-act, then nothing of His crucifixion would be more special than that of any other crucifixion no matter how lofty or significant an event that may be. Why is that? We cannot discern His crucifixion from other crucifixions since the form and nature of the pain would be the same for anyone crucified. Thus the crucifixion of Jesus would not give us any unique and universal messages, even if we might assume that it does from a dogmatic point of view. On the contrary, if we see the crucifixion from the context of His whole life-act then we can see not only what, but also *why*, and *how*, the crucifixion took place. The way of His life-act offers the ground and content of the crucifixion. In this way, whereas the life-act *interprets* and therefore *explains* the crucifixion, the crucifixion confirms this interpretation and explanation. By establishing the very ground and content of the crucifixion 'from above', the life-act 'from below' generates the power of the crucifixion 'from above'. What authenticates the meaning and power of the crucifixion is not the crucifixion itself, but the way of Jesus Christ's *whole* life-act. To this clarified extent, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ had begun already, and was completed in, and with, His birth and act. Indeed, observing christology from the importance of this 'from below' perspective, our responsible understanding of christology would certainly demand that we see the crucifixion in the light of His *life-act* rather than the other way around. Therefore, the issue 'from above' or 'from below' could by no means simply be a matter of 'psychologizing' or 'metaphysicalizing' the orthodox christology as Tracy supposes, implying that the issue is not really important, but a somewhat unnecessary pedantic speculation, playing on words or concepts.

The importance of discussing the issue whether or not christology should be done 'from above' or 'from below', lies at heart in our awareness that the primary task of 'doing' or 'studying' theology is not theorisation or theologisation or christologisation or for the theological ivory tower, but it should be *for the people*. Why? Certainly *theology* is inevitable primarily because human beings are rational



being who therefore raise questions and attempt to understand what they have heard, seen, and experienced. Differently put, in many cases, a certain process of 'conceptualisation' is expected so that we become conscious of what we know, what we are doing, and what needs to be done. However, this necessity for conceptualisation may become rather irrelevant or even useless to the people when it merely becomes something done for the sake of conceptualisation itself. In general, Christians confess that this particular Jesus is God Himself, the Lord and Saviour of the world. This confession, if accepted, suggests that theology is ultimately a matter of christology because we have no other responsible ground or reference for our understanding of 'God' except the specific life-act of Jesus Christ. Indeed our understanding of christology is crucial, for it determines our understanding of God the Creator of the universe. This implies that our perception of 'God' cannot do away with focusing upon what *that particular Jesus has said and has done*. And what we can conclude, if we agree with our view thus far, is that the primary concern of christology (theology) does not merely stand for a christologic (theologic) or christ-theory, but the christopraxis, viz. the christology of *liberating* from all kinds shackles (Gospel) and of *challenging* for both physical conditions and theoretical ideologies (mission) specifically and concretely *for and towards the people*. But the importance of this christopraxis could be more tangibly and relevantly maintained when we preserve this 'from below' aspect of christology and when we constantly refer to *this* christology. For we cannot have more specific and concrete christology for the people without this concrete and specific reality. Any theological and christological conceptualisation cannot bypass this concrete manifestation, 'from below'. Hence, responsible Christian theology consists in its 'consistent exegesis' of this 'low' aspect of christology (and we suppose that this is what Barth has done throughout his dogmatics). Consequently, the issue of christology 'from below' (or 'from above') is critical; it is not simply a matter of speculation but *the* theological bulwark. This 'from below' aspect, therefore, has tremendous theological implications for many issues: for *social justice* which is one of the main messages of prophets throughout Scripture, for the *relevance* of the

Christian doctrine of God to the world; for the question of the *uniqueness* of Christianity in connection with other religions; and most obviously, for the proper *content* of Christian faith.

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